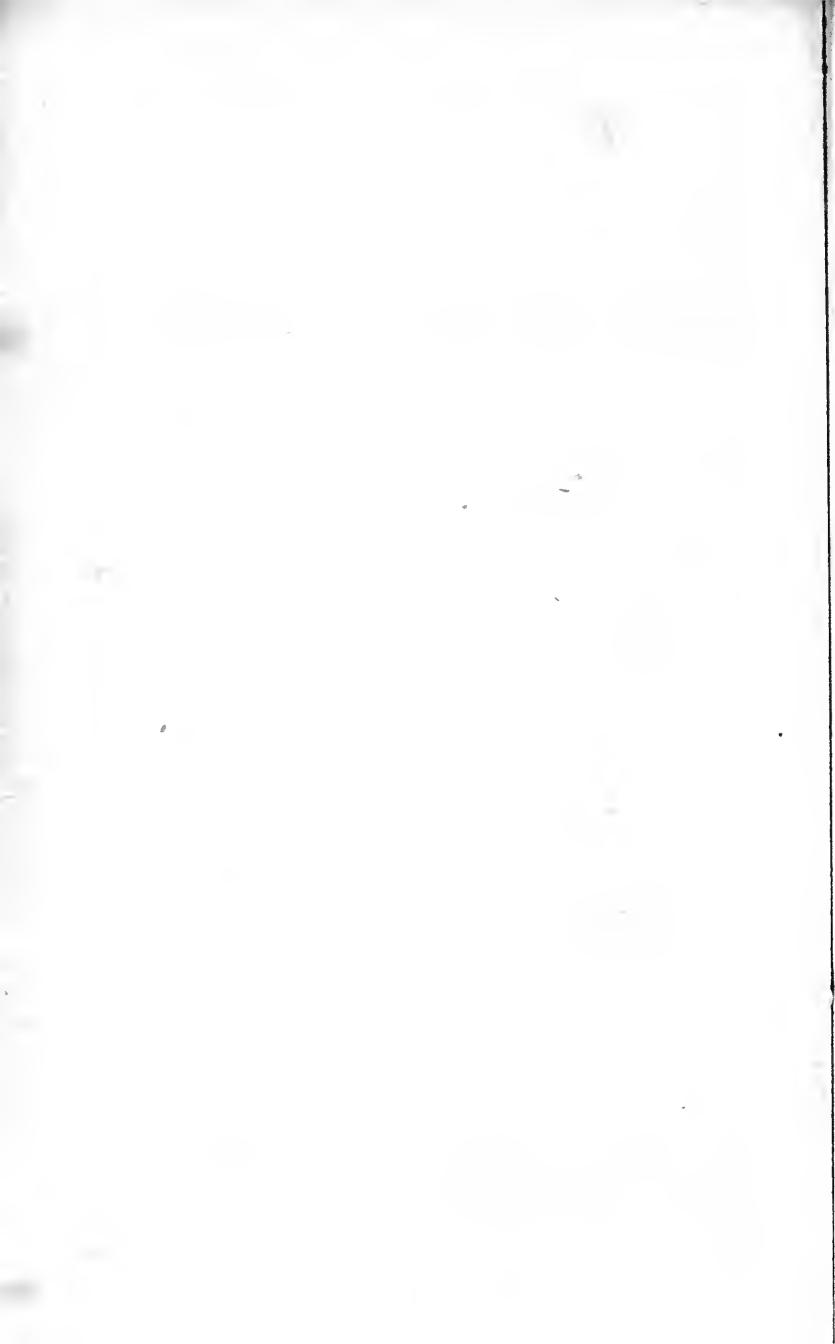




"It was quite dusk, nearly dark, when the Doctor and Alida reached the Smug-
gler's Bridge; so much so that they did not observe two men who came up from
another woods path just as they reached the bridge."—PAGE 177.



THE
GREEN-MOUNTAIN GIRLS:

A Story of Vermont.

BY BLYTHE WHITE, JR.

passed

[ROBINSON, SOLOMON]

"I shall a tale unfold—

A story tell that's ne'er been told."



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TO

M Y N A T I V E P L A C E ;

TO

BRANDON VALLEY, AND GOOD OLD PARSON WHITE,

AND EVERY OTHER HILL AND VALLEY OF THE GREEN MOUNTAIN STATE,

THIS ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHARACTER OF

THE GREEN-MOUNTAIN GIRLS

IS HOPEFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.



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This is a chapter that may be omitted, but one that will be read. Indeed it may be read first, and if so, will not spoil the story.



PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE

In explanation of the objects of this volume, and things treated of, and characters introduced. Except by those who begin a book in the middle, and read out each way, this chapter should be first read.

Many of the incidents connected with the early settlement of all the forest regions of this country, are more remarkable and startlingly interesting, than any of the creations of romance. Yet, like the forests where they occurred, they have passed away, never to be known again. Many an incident that has awakened the sympathies of all who knew it, or thrilled to the heart of a family, a neighborhood, or village, like the scream of a panther upon the crag that overhangs the old log school-house, where I gathered a few of the rudiments of a plain education; would have thrilled the world's great heart, but like the panther's scream, it was heard by only a few at night, and was forgotten in the morning.

How brilliantly beautiful the burning of a dry

pine upon some mountain peak, shoots up the forked tongue of flame into the cerulean dome, one of nature's "light-houses of the skies," and how all eyes within its circle of radiance, are upward turned to watch its beauty.

In the very valley upon which that light falls, there burns as bright a flame, but it shines not so far, and both are evanescent. Of the two forms that furnished food for the fire, one perhaps remains a blackened stump, and the other is but a pile of ashes beneath a grassy mound, in the resting-place of the dead, on yonder hill-side.

The daring deeds of the heroes of the war of 1812 have been emblazoned upon their country's shield; for that shield is its literature; but there were other deeds of daring—other actors upon the stage at the same time, that have fallen like the leaves of the dark forests that covered all northern Vermont in those days, and actors and actions, like the leaves, now fertilize the earth for the husbandman that tills his field where giant pines and hemlocks grew, and where, fifty years ago, such scenes as I shall picture thrilled the blood that flowed then through throbbing hearts.

It is among the pioneers of that dark forest, that I have picked up the incidents of this story—a story not of heroes—not of burning pines that glared, and went out, never to light the world again, but of the

bright enduring flames that have shot up in the low valley, or lighted the path through the forest for a period of life, either brief, or long enduring.

My characters are all from every-day scenes of real life, and my story is a record of nothing more than has occurred in many a locality, other than that of Brandon Valley, deeply interesting at the moment to all that knew its living actors, but unknown to all beyond its sphere, because there are but few of those who hew out homes in the woods, that have time to write stories, and still fewer the number, who have the gift of story-telling.

Whether that gift is mine, I have yet to learn by the judgment of my readers.

It is a common-place story, of common-place men and women, told in a common-place way. But it is full of exciting scenes, that will, perhaps, look more like the creation of some vivid imagination, than reality. It is true, that my readers may not recognize Brandon Valley by its name, but many a one will exclaim, "Why, I know that place!"

So, many a one will remember old Deacon Brandon, and his distillery, and I doubt not that there are a score of persons still living, that remember the storm, the lightning, the bright flame that shone all over the valley the night it was lightning struck, and in two hours, had passed out of existence.

How many too well recognize Parson White, as "our old minister," and I am sure that his son Blythe, still lives in the memory of a host of friends, and may I hope that Blythe White, Junior, will be remembered long after these leaves, like those of autumn on the Green Mountains, have been swept down, and buried in the dust of ages.

Then how many prototypes will be found for that poor, outcast boy, Michael Granly—who still lives, a grey-haired sire, surrounded by children, and grandchildren, and honored by all who know him, and loved by many who enjoy the blessings that his wealth enables him to bestow on others. He is a monument of fame to the

GREEN MOUNTAIN GIRLS:

for it was one of them that lifted him from a depth of degradation, and started him upon the road that leads up the steep mountain-side, to the pinnacle where the burning pine is seen from a thousand lower hill-tops.

Who ever breathed the air of those Green Mountains, or heard of their sons, that will not glory in the illustration of the character of their girls.

That of Alida Blythe, is one to be proud of. Can any daughter of America read it, and not rejoice to call her sister?

The coldest heart will throb—the dryest eye will moisten—and every one will sympathize with her misfortunes.

What soul will not expand, as it follows the saddened path of her daughter, or will not rejoice, and weep by turns, as the characters of these Green Mountain Girls are unfolded. If any one can study that of Mary Tharp, and not love her, he is not mortal, nor is he more, for angels do.

How many hearts will bleed as they read the early history of Luthella Brandon, or rejoice as it is developed with her noble character, I cannot say, but I can exercise the Yankee privilege, and guess. I guess that none will read, and not feel the heart warming with pride, to think that she is a true specimen of the genuine *Green Mountain Girls*.

Although Mrs. Decker, Mrs. Stoneheart, and Mrs. Flint, all sat for their portraits, and all are taken true to life, I hope no one will say, “I know the original,” for these are specimens of women, I would rejoice to see extinct.

But my story is full of men and women, that may be taken as patterns, and their virtues copied, and all may strive to emulate, while they read of, and honor their noble deeds.

Since so many of my characters are living, I have been obliged to avoid names of persons, and places,

and carefully hide localities, so that none may recognize anything but the good deeds I would immortalize, while I bury the evil ones in oblivion.

As a whole, this is a work of history, illustrated by fiction, except in all that is depicted of good, glorious deeds, there is no fiction—it is only an illustration of Vermont men, and the characters of the *Green Mountain Girls*.

GREEN-MOUNTAIN GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

Scenes upon the Vermont frontier during "the last war."—Stories about smuggling and Yankee smugglers—The sleigh ride—A new way to carry pork to-market.

The reader that expects to find any love and murder in this chapter, will be disappointed. But he will find why whiskey is called "Hardware."

ALL along our extensive frontier, during the war of 1812, there was a constant effort made by one party to evade the non-intercourse laws, and by another to prevent everything that bore any relation to smuggling; though to be known as a smuggler, was no disparagement to a man's character, so he did not get caught in the act, and suffer a forfeiture of his goods.

Some of these Yankee devices, would have done credit to the greatest adept in the business that ever studied the profession in Europe.

Since a number of the characters of my story were more or less connected with this business, and some of the most intensely interesting scenes in this volume, are those con-

nected with the smugglers, I will commence my tale with a chapter of anecdotes that I have often heard related ; sometimes by the actors, and sometimes by those who lived upon the spot, and were cognizant at the time of the exciting, or laughable events.

One of the adepts in the smuggling business—one of the most finished hands—was known all along the Vermont frontier as Doctor Field.

One of the most successful, as well as most laughable of his tricks, was known and understood for a long time, whenever the inquiry was made, "how is pork?" This simple question was enough to throw some of the customs officers into a paroxysm of rage. The resident officers had been fooled so often by "the boys," that it was thought necessary by the authorities at Washington, to give them the assistance of a company of regular soldiers. These were ordered to give their most efficient aid to the entire suppression of smuggling, between the Connecticut River and Lake Memphremagog ; a sheet of water, now much more resorted to by the tourist and lover of wild scenery, than by the counterfeiters and smugglers of 1812 ; and even in later years, it was known as the great head-quarters of a lawless band. The mountain sides echoed then to the wild halloo of the hunter, or the signal call of those who had their homes in their secret places.

Now, the same hills give back the echoes of the steamboat whistle, as it makes its daily trips of pleasure, with its gay load of travellers up and down this mountain-locked lake. On the east of this lake, the first town south of the

line, and right opposite Stanstead is Derby ; then a wild new settlement, now a lovely village and rich farming town. It was here that the company of soldiers were stationed, to entirely suppress all sorts of smuggling. One of the most particular instructions to the officer in command, was to utterly break up the trade in provisions, sent from this side to feed the poor fellows on the north side of the line of latitude forty-five, since, according to reports at head-quarters, this traffic had grown to a degree, perfectly scandalous to the Green Mountain State. But the fact was, that the temptation was a little too strong for human nature in any State.

The British government had filled Canada with so many red coats, that they consumed everything in the way of fresh meats, without getting half a supply ; and the French settlers, besides, not making a surplus, to sell to the army, had a more deadly hatred of the British soldiers, ten times over, than the Yankees had ; for the former hated them with a national hatred, embittered by war and subjugation, while the latter felt no more enmity than the prize-fighter does towards his antagonist, who is bound to whip, for the honor of the thing.

Upon the Canadian side, then, there was not only a short supply of provisions, but really less disposition to profit by the presence of the soldiers, than upon the American side. Hence, prices attained such extravagant rates, that the temptation was greatly increased to smuggle over food, notwithstanding it was contrary to all the rules of warfare, to feed an enemy.

But recollect, that enemy was John Bull, a most glorious old fellow to eat roast beef and fresh pork, and willing to pay for it. And where is the Yankee that would not prefer to feed him well, and then whip him upon a full stomach. There would be a sort of refined cruelty in whipping a hungry man, besides, how foolish it would be, when he was willing to pay for his dinner, and be whipped afterwards.

However, our Government objected to this method of conquering a peace, and when Captain Simonds was sent there with his company, he had strict orders to suppress this traffic in provisions, and for some time, his new vigilance—new brooms always sweep clean—nearly swept the whole business out of existence.

It was no use any longer to kill a fat pig, and leave it out all night to be stolen, because, somehow, it was not stolen by the right parties—the thief would not pay.

In the meantime, the temptation to smuggle a little fresh pork over the line, grew stronger and stronger ; for as the difficulties increased the prices rose, until it was double or treble in value on the Canada side, over that upon our own, where the prices seemed to fall, as the other side went up.

But the worst feature of all, was that Captain Simonds made his brags that he had broken up the smuggling business, and in fact that he was altogether too sharp for the Green mountaineers.

As he was a sprig of aristocracy, from a southern city, this boast did not sit well upon the boys' stomachs, nor, in fact, upon the girls' either ; for to their honor be it spoken,

nowhere on earth can more abiding faith and love be found, than among the Green Mountain Girls.

They had no idea of allowing their friends, brothers, cousins or sweethearts, to be outdone in anything that required a little tact or smartness. It was then a point of honor to outwit the customs officers, and their allies, the "Uncle Sam's soldiers," and if possible, pluck a feather out of the cap of the southern fop, who seemed to feel that he belonged to a superior order of beings to those that he found living here in log cabins, among hemlock stumps. He forgot that they were off-shoots of some of the best stock in all the old settlements of New England, and that a life in the wood, only served to sharpen naturally bright intellects.

It was now "hog killing time," and it was entirely too much for human nature to bear, to sell pork in Derby at ten cents, while it was twenty or twenty-five in Stanstead, just across an imaginary line upon a level piece of land, which was guarded night and day with such assiduous care upon both sides, for fear a little pork and beef would get across one way, or a little rum or tea the other.

It would have been amusing, if it had not been so extremely ridiculous, to see the strutting turkey cocks in red coats upon the north side of this line, and blue coats upon this, stalking back and forth, watching each other.

Notwithstanding the belligerent attitudes of the red coats and blue coats, the people kept up a constant intercourse, going back and forth, only subjecting themselves to search, to see if they had anything contraband of war in

their wagons or sleighs, which would be seized and confiscated by the customs officers, for that was all individual profit. The officers seized from the smugglers, not so much to stop smuggling, and benefit the Federal government, as themselves. It was a constant war of wits, without much ill-feeling, for it often happened that the officers and smugglers were intimate neighbors, and sometimes, even brothers.

If the Government at Washington ever imagined that it could station men enough along the Canada line, to prevent the people from trafficking across, back and forth, it very much mistook the Yankee character. Nothing short of a picket fence of bayonets would have been sufficient, and even then, some fellows would have dug under or flew over.

As long as personal intercourse was not interdicted, it was impossible to prevent small traffic, since the ingenuity of concealment baffled all the cunning of search. And if a party was detected, and lost his goods to-day, it only served to sharpen his wits to-morrow. The people were constantly outwitting the custom-house officers.

It was owing to this fact being represented at Washington, that the soldiers were sent here ; and for them there was no love. It was as much to outwit them, as for the profit of the thing, that the following plan was hit upon to get a little pork over the line. Almost as a matter of course, Doctor Field was the concoctor of the scheme, but to carry it out he had to have a goodly company of assistants, and what was more than all, a part of those must be girls. But who that knows the country, does not know that nowhere else on earth could be found a company more

ready for a daring expedition, either upon a tour of duty, or for one of pure frolic and fun, than the Green Mountain girls?

The plan was agreed to perhaps, on their part, all the more readily, because of the dislike they had taken to Captain Simonds. The truth is, he had undervalued the Green Mountain girls, and they were disposed to give him proof that they were not verdant, however so were their hills and mountains.

It did not require any persuasion, after the plan was named, to induce them to go into the measure most heartily. According to arrangements, it was circulated through the settlements, that the boys and girls were going to get up a sleigh ride to Stanstead, next week, and Captain Simonds was even asked to join them.

He had a good excuse, that, being a soldier, he would not be permitted to visit the enemy's dominions. He had no objection, however, to let the sleighing party go over, but cautioned them to be careful and not make any purchases of goods to bring back, for that he would not tolerate, even to a single yard of ribbon or paper of pins. He never suspected the real object of the party.

Doctor Field went over the day before the ride was to come off, and arranged with the commander to let the party pass the line without any delay for examination.

The company made their rendezvous at "Decker's," a noted tavern, some fifteen or twenty miles from the line.

The night was one of those clear cold ones, when the trees snap with frost, and the snow fairly screams with cold

as the sleighs glide over it, and the horses turn white in the ice of their own breath. As fast as the sleighs drove and unloaded the girls at the door, Decker had them driven right into his capacious barn, and when all were ready for a start, he had them hitched up and the girls all carefully bundled in their furs before he opened the great doors ; so that if in fact, the girls had been contraband, the custom-house spy that was lurking about could not have counted the number ; for when the doors opened they went out in a perfect rush, with a wild and joyous shout.

As they neared the line, they had a cordon of sentries to pass, but they drove right up to the Captain's quarters, and asked permission to pass, and the girls, peeping out of their skins and blankets, laughingly invited him to come and search for contraband goods. He, however, declined to look beyond the surface of things, and permitted the whole party to pass, little suspecting that he was the victim of one of the cunningest tricks of the smugglers.

If he could have been present when the party alighted at the "King's Arms," he would have opened his eyes in wonder, to see that of every two bonnets, only one got out of the sleigh—the other was driven away to the barn.

He would have opened his eyes still wider, if he had been present to see the unbonneting and unwrapping from among the blankets, of the figures that had sat so upright, and to more than one of which the beau captain had bowed and said, "Good evening, miss," when he found that instead of a jolly fat Green Mountain girl, each one was a jolly fat carcase of pork. It was a fat trick, the profits of which

more than paid all the expenses of the sleigh ride ; and when at length it became known—for it was too good, the girls said, to keep—it more than paid up many an old score they had set down against the captain and his blue coats

The poor victims of the successful trick never heard the last of it. Every time a pig squealed, it gave a hint for some mischievous boy to run and tell a soldier to look out for another pork trade.

At killing time, some girl was sure to send Captain Simonds a present of a pig's head, with a bonnet on. Whether he roasted the head or not, I cannot say, but certain it is, the girls frequently roasted him, by inviting him to dinner whenever they had roast pork. He took these jokes in pretty good part from the girls, but if any of the young men wanted a free fight, they had only to say pork, and the fat was in a blaze.

Another of the successful devices of Dr. Field, was to buy cattle and drive them up near the line, at a place known as the Brandon Valley, where they were always stolen by "them thieving Canadians." It was a little singular too, that they were always taken from a pasture near Deacon Brandon's old distillery ; of which we shall hear a good deal by and by. People wondered that such continued losses did not ruin him, but really he seemed to fatten upon his calamities. All sorts of possible contrivances, that his fertile mind could invent, were put in practice to get British goods over the line, in every sort of way, that none but him could think of. One time he wound a whole lot of silks and laces round his horse, and then

stitched another horse skin over the whole, and drove down in his sleigh, right by the custom-house officer, and told him that he expected a fellow over on the hill road was going down with a load of goods, and if he would get in the sleigh with him, he would drive him over there. Thus thrown of his guard, the officer accepted the offer ; and on the way, the doctor called a moment at Captain Marshall's door, and the captain asked him where he was going ; he said he thought even of going down to Robinson's cross-roads. The captain said carelessly, that he wished Field would take a dozen muskets down there, as they were going to have a muster next week of a new company, and he had promised to lend them some muskets, and it would oblige Captain Robinson very much if he could take them along as well as not. Of course the doctor was willing, as the officer was going to get out at the hill road, and so the muskets were put in, and the smuggler and custom-house officer rode on together, drawn by a horse loaded with contraband goods, carrying a dozen big-barrelled muskets, every one of which, was stuffed with fine lace, and the cartridge boxes furnished with the same kind of ammunition.

Another time he was chased by the officers to one of his stopping places, a sort of smugglers' head-quarters, where he had to "hole up." The officers knew from the motion of things, that he had contraband articles in the house, but they could not get in to search, and so they kept watch night and day for a week, thinking to nab them whenever they started off with any show of carrying away the goods. The doctor began to feel uneasy, for he had some exceed-

ingly valuable laces in the house, which he was bound to get out by hook or by crook someway.

In that neighborhood lived one Jason Inwright, who was about the oddest animal in Vermont. I have often seen him ride with a bundle of straw for a saddle, and moosewood bark for a bridle. Jason was fond of a little good whiskey, and Dr. Field knew how to approach his weaker side. A few hours after Field had walked out one day, Jason rode up in his peculiar primitive style and asked to see the doctor. He was told he was gone, and was about to turn away, when Blake, the owner of the house called to him.

"Halloo, Jason, when are you going to take away that grind-stone? I'll charge you for storage, if you do not get it home pretty soon. It is in the way in the house, and I am afraid to put it out of doors, for fear some of these bloody customs officers will run off with it, or break it; to see if there a'n't some smuggled goods in it. I wish you would contrive some way to get it home."

"I'll take it now, if you'll put it up before me. Old Brandy and I can manage it, I guess."

Jason was a little drunk, and this proposition was received with shouts of laughter by the idlers hanging around. Two or three of the customs officers were particularly anxious to see the fun, for they expected Jason and his grindstone would both tumble in the mud together.

Blake told him he was a fool, and tried to dissuade him from the attempt; but like other obstinate fools, he would have his own way. Blake said he could not hold it on.

Jason said he would put it in a sack ; and pulled out one which formed a component part of his saddle, and told Blake to put it into that, and he would show him how to do it.

This was done, and two or three men came out lugging it between them, and succeeded in getting it up forward of Jason, on the neck of old Brandy ; and the two started off with their load amid the shouts of those who witnessed the odd feat.

Some months afterwards, some of the officers discovered in the woods south of Jason's house, a wooden box, in form very much resembling the grindstone carried away from Blake's while they were watching the smugglers. They did not find the valuables it had contained ; but they found that Dr. Field's cunning and Jason's oddity had been too much for their keen scent after smuggled goods. The wooden box only resembled a grindstone, and the trick was cunningly devised to get some very valuable things through the cordon of " hounds," as the officers were called, that had holed the " old fox," and had been waiting quietly a long time to unearth him.

Another of the smuggler's tricks made one of the officers a butt for sport as long as he lived. Stanstead, Canada, was a noted depot of goods, and every road leading south was constantly guarded and carefully watched, night or day, for ten or fifteen miles from the line. This was the gauntlet through which the smugglers had to run. Sometimes they would get half way and have to " hole up ;" and they were not always as successful in getting out, even by

such cute contrivances as Jason and his grindstone, or "giving a customs officer a ride," as in the following case.

One day a boy came running in breathless haste to get the dollar reward for information, to tell the officer "that a wagon came down the road from the line, and turned off at the school-house, down towards Magog lake, driving like fun, and he guessed he would come round to the road again at Squire Dickey's, and may be he had a proper sight of goods in his box," which was that of a common tin pedlar.

Down went the officer as fast as he could ride to Squire Dickey's tavern, about three miles below, arriving just as the pedlar was about to open his box, to exhibit his goods for sale, to the old lady and half a dozen of her girls, drawn up around the wagon, which from some unaccountable reason was stationed on the back side of the house instead of the front. The keen eye of the pedlar espied the officer as he came round the corner, and down went the lid with a bang, and the padlock was on, and the key in his pocket before the officer could get near enough for a peep; but he was satisfied, for he had heard the old lady say she wanted some tea, and one of the girls, frightened at the bang of the lid, had run into the house in such a fright that she had no time to lay down the dress pattern in her hands; which however she had brought out on purpose to act her part in the drama, which the pedlar had got up for special purposes.

"Halloo, old fellow, you are in a great hurry to shut up, it appears to me. What have you got in that box that you are so 'fraid I shall see?"

"Nothing in the world, but a few pieces of tin ware and paper rags. I have quite sold out."

"Yes, yes, I understand that, but you don't sell me. Do you think I did not see that girl with her dry goods?"

"Well, cap'in, 'spose you did ; is that anything to me ? She has a right to run I calculate, here in her dad's own yard, hain't she ?"

"Oh yes, and you have a right to bring your wagon round here by the back door, but it looks a little suspicious ; so open up with a good grace ; I am going to search that box to the bottom."

"Upon my word, cap'in, I have not got a single contraband article, and I am in a dreadful hurry to be off. I have got to be at Decker's by sundown, to see a man there to-night, and it looks as though it was going to rain ; don't you think so."

"Well it does look a little squally —— for you, that is a fact. I hardly think you will get to Decker's to-night, unless you go a-foot."

"Oh, I must ; now don't say that, cap'in ; I would not miss it for fifty dollars ; come now take my word this time, do, now, that is a clever fellow. I swan to gracious, if I had'nt rather give you five dollars, than be detained. I tell you there is nothing there, can't you take a fellow's word !"

"Yes, I will take your word, if you will answer me a few questions."

"Sartin : anything you ask."

"Well, then, you have been to Stanstead ?"

"Yes, but not a-trading. I sold out on this side of the

line, and just drove over to see my brother that lives there."

"Ha, ha, your brother that lives there—I see—in partnership. Well, you left there to-day, to go to Decker's, a somewhat noted smuggler's stand, and you are in a great hurry."

"Yes, that's a fact."

"With nothing in your wagon?"

"Well, now, cap'in, I did not say nothing, only a few pieces of tin-ware and some rags."

"Very well, they are contraband."

"Oh, but you have not got me there. I did not take my wagon over the line."

"Then what did you turn off from the main road for, at the school-house, and go down toward the lake?"

"Now, I declare, cap'in, who told you that? Somebody must have told you, and so I might as well own up; I did do that."

"What for, if you were in such a wonderful hurry to get to Decker's before night? You went more than two miles out of your way, on a bad road."

"So I did, that is at first, but as I was light, and had two of the placeyist smart horses in all these parts, I did not mind it, for I knew if I come down by your place, you would be bothering me with questions; you are always so particular."

"How did you know I should be there. It might be somebody else on guard."

"No, I knew Bob, Smith and Hinman, were all off

another way, and you were there alone to-day. I say, cap'in, you had better let me go on, as you're 'n a hurry to get back as soon as possible, or something might happen, and nobody there to look after it."

"Oh thank you ; I think I am doing pretty well. Besides, I don't think your brother will send anybody else down to run the gauntlet to-day ; you fellows understand business too well for that. Come, open up."

"Oh, cap'in, I am in such a hurry ; and I have not got a thing you want, unless 'tis a dozen papers of lamp-black, and I will give you them, if you let me go, besides the five dollars. Come now, do, I am in such a hurry."

"So am I, for I must get back ; as you seem to know that all the officers are out of the way, perhaps the rest of the smugglers know the same thing, and so as I am in as big a hurry as you are, you will take off that lock, or I shall."

With that he picked up an axe, and was about proceeding to extremities, when the pedlar, finding there was no escape, took off the lock, raised the lid of his deep box, holding it by one hand, told him to look, but he would find nothing but the few tins, the rags, and lamp-black. The officer mounted the wheel, and stretched his body over, far down into the pedlar's box, hunting for the hidden goods, beneath the rags. Just then, the horses started suddenly, over went the "Captain," neck and heels ; the lid fell with a crash ; the lock was on in a moment ; crack went the whip, and an hour after, the pedlar drove up to Decker's ; his horses in a foam of sweat ; and everybody expecting to

see the chasing customs officers in pursuit, as that was a sight they were often treated to on that road.

Once at Decker's, and the goods were landed, they were safe, for the secret hiding-places were beyond the reach of the pursuers.

Decker met the new comers at the door. "Come, unload—how far back are they—what have you got?"

"Got, why I have got a custom-house officer. Do you want to buy one?"

"Yes, I should like one of the critters for a show."

"Well, I will let you have one in prime order, except he may be a little smutty, in consequence of being engaged in the lamp-black trade, if you will feed my horses, and give me my supper, and by that time the boys will be here, and we are going south a good piece to-night.

The pedlar got his supper, and horses fed, and fresh for a new start, just as "the boys" drove up. He then hitched his team to their wagon all ready for a start, when he called out the landlord to receive his pay in the promised article. He opened the box, and the poor fellow crept out amid a shout of laughter, not only at the trick, but at his appearance, begrimed as he was, like a chimney-sweeper, from head to foot. He begged them never to say anything about it; promised to pay the bill to Decker, and gave the pedlar a certificate that he had searched his wagon, and that he might pass, without further examination.

The parties interested kept the secret just as long as it was their interest to do so, and then let it out. It is said, that fellow hated the sight of a tin pedlar's wagon, as long

as he lived, and never looked at anything black, without thinking of lamp-black.

One of the smugglers' tricks that proved successful for a long time, was known among themselves as "the hardware business." It was almost as cunning as the device of the grindstone. Lying to the eastward of the new settlement where Deacon Brandon's distillery was located, was an unbroken forest extending to the Connecticut river, some twenty-five miles, without a single road leading into Canada. Whoever knew a Vermont forest forty or fifty years ago, need not be told that such a tract offered a more effectual barrier to the smugglers than a small army of customs officers. It was mountain, hill, valley, swamp, lake and stream, interspersed with thickets almost impenetrable, and an occasional windfall of monster pines, cedars, hemlocks, firs, beech and maple trees, which all abound in that region. In summer, the streams are too high to ford; in winter, when bridged by ice, the snow generally lies three to five feet thick on a level, or in drifts five times as deep. This tract it was not thought necessary to guard, and yet through such a barrier many thousands of dollar's worth of goods found their way to the settled portion of the state. The smugglers worked out a road from the inhabited portion of Canada, extending several miles over the line, ostensibly for the purpose of hauling pine shingles from some good timber about the termination of the road. From them several blind paths led south, which could only be followed through the woods by those who knew the secret marks; but there were a few who did know them, and travelled them in sum-

mer with nicely laden pack horses, and in winter upon snow-shoes, dragging hand-sleds over the deep snow. Arriving in the night, out upon the travelled roads, they knew very well where to go to "hole up," until by some trick they could fool the officers so as to get their goods far enough away from the line not to be suspected, or stopped and searched as they travelled south, "to Boston and a market."

Deacon Brandon's old still house, though for a long time unsuspected, was one of their harbors, and one of the ingenious plans for secreting goods was inside of whisky barrels. A cask filled with merchandize was fixed in the centre of a barrel, and headed up, and then the space filled with whisky, and thus carried openly through the country.

If the driver met an officer, he out with his gimblet, and tapped every barrel, and let him taste to satisfy him that it was nothing but the pure domestic article. The plan worked well until one day an "old fox," as he was called, insisted upon knocking out the bung and trying the liquor with a proof glass. Ever since that, whisky has been known under the flash name of "hardware," because the interior cask proved to be filled with that kind of valuable goods.

Dr. Field, whose glory was to outwit a customs officer, declared that he would run a load of "hardware" in spite of the cunning of all the old foxes between there and the Connecticut line. For this purpose he had a tin tube fixed through the centre of the hardware cask, directly opposite the bung, so that a proof glass might be dropt to the bottom, and find nothing but whisky.

This is a kind of "hardware" that has slain its thousands, and tens of thousands more than the sword. It is a hardware that makes hard fare for all who use it, and often leaves but little to wear upon the backs of those who put an enemy in their mouth, to steal away their brains. It is no wonder, in view of the many "hard cases" made by its use, that the stuff should be called "HARDWARE."

At the time our story commenced, almost every one of the sweet valleys of those dear evergreen hills, had its own pandemonium. It was generally a log building, set into the side of a hill, from which a stream of one of those sweetest springs in the world, of pure water, clear, sparkling water, from a gushing Green mountain fountain, was conducted into the "mash tubs" of the upper loft, and there mixed with the meal, or mashed potatoes, to stand until it took on the incipient stages of decomposition, when it was run out into a copper still, through rough wooden troughs, the "mash" much resembling swill for hogs, and the troughs always reminding one, of those in which those filthy brutes are usually fed.

In the lower room the fire is kept up, and the steam of the seething mass of corruption in the copper, sends up through a goose neck on the top of the cap, its stream of poison steam, which being condensed in a coil of hollow pipe, fixed in a cask of water, comes down into a barrel set to catch the drip of the pipe, technically called a worm. Truly we may call it the gnawing, consuming worm of the still.

Here in the lower regions, half under ground, the room

filled with smoke and steam of whisky, fire, and tobacco, might ever be seen night or day, half a dozen of the neighbors, who had just dropt in to inquire the news, or to see how the still was turning out, or just to take the least taste in the world of the "pure stuff, hot and fresh from the fountain of life." Fountain of life ! Why, it is the very abode of death.

Here, as appendages, in the shape of firemen, wood-choppers, mash-tubbers, hog-feeders, were always to be seen the last remains of half a dozen old "hard cases," with sore eyes and bloated visages, full of wild blasphemies and obscenities, and yet, notwithstanding that the palpable evidence of the effect of the habitual use of this liquid devil pouring out of that worm was before them, men in respectable standing would come here to tempt the tempter to make themselves like one of those.

Deacon Brandon's still, before alluded to, was just such a place as this, and one of the largest manufactories of "hardware," as well as a store-house, or hiding-place, for those who dealt in such wares.

Distilling in Vermont, over forty years ago, was not considered a disreputable business ; but the time has come when it would not be taken as a mark of distinction worthy of credit, for a deacon to proclaim himself a distiller of cider brandy, or rye whisky, or what is still more fiery, and at that day very common among the early settlers of the Green Mountains, whisky made of potatoes, upon which it was said that a man could get drunk three times a day, and

burn himself up three times as quick, as with any other fire water ever concocted in the witches' cauldron.

In that day, particularly in a new country, drinking was almost universal ; but the time has come when ministers of the gospel do not deem it essentially a part of neighborly hospitality, to treat their evening's guests to a mug of flip, as my worthy old grandfather always did. The time has come, when it is neither respectable nor fashionable in Vermont to get drunk. But then the still-house was a sort of neighborhood exchange, and amid the social gatherings of such a place, many a good man was ruined. Here it was that the father of one I shall introduce to the reader directly, met his death, in a drunken scuffle with one of his neighbors, leaving his wife and only child, Alida, to struggle against poverty, for his habits had reduced him from a state of affluence to a little farm, loaded with debt and mortgaged to the distiller, and an only daughter, betrothed to the distiller's son.

It was in just such a place as this that Nat Brandon had spent his youth, and acquired habits which the widow Blythe foresaw would bring ruin upon her daughter. And yet she did not know one half of the iniquity of Deacon Brandon's distillery. She did not know that every night, after honest folks were in bed, Nat Brandon, Blythe White—a pampered son of her old pastor—Scale Williams, John Longwood, and two or three others of the young scions of first families, and some others who lacked that mark of respectability, were engaged around the gambling

table, which was a board laid upon two barrels, upon one end of which stood the hot stew of whiskey and sugar ; and that this same board was often loaded with roasted turkeys, ducks, geese, chickens, stolen from neighboring hen-roosts.

These were little crimes, to which drinking always leads, and the larger ones are sure to follow. They did follow. One of them was perpetrated upon a poor drunkard's daughter, half idiotic, who was sent by her father to fill the little old earthen jug, such as we have often seen going the same road, carried by a string tied round the neck, and stopped with a corn-cob in place of a cork.

The father was aroused by this outrage upon his daughter, and went to the still-house to take vengeance upon the ruffians, but what he said, or what they did is unknown, for the next day a coroner's jury said he "died by the visitation of Providence." This saved any unpleasant circumstances to the "young gentlemen" who made Deacon Brandon's old distillery their nightly rendezvous, though it did not stop a rumor that Mike Granly, a sort of Paul Pry boy, peeped through a crack into the still-house, and saw "the boys," as the young men were called, pouring hot whisky through a funnel down the throat of poor old Zef Tharp, till he was so drunk that he could not walk, and then they carried him out and laid him in the snow bank, where he was found frozen to death the next morning.

It was no wonder that the widow Blythe was unwilling that her daughter should marry such a young man, as she knew that Nat Brandon must be, notwithstanding he belonged to "one of the first families in the town."

Alida's father had been one of the first men of his native town, a wealthy merchant of one of the sweetest villages of Connecticut, where his family had lived in comparative splendor, but which they had been obliged to relinquish in consequence of a failure in business, brought about by the effects of the generous, noble nature of his disposition, and unfortunate habit of indulging in strong drinks, and keeping a free table for a host of friends of the same character, so far as the indulgence in the habit of intoxication was concerned.

With just enough left of his wealth to procure a small piece of land in the then new country, and great place of emigration, the north part of Vermont, he moved there and located his family in a log cabin, and went to work with a will, to clear off a farm, among the hemlocks, and other monster trees, which grow on the strong soil of that part of the state. In this he would have succeeded, for during the four or five first years, he had abstained from drinking, but then most unfortunately for him, Deacon Brandon put up his distillery, where the fumes came directly across poor Blythe's clearing, every time the wind blew from the north.

"My dear Alida, said Mrs. Blythe, one day, I am afraid to give my consent for you to marry Nat Brandon. His father" —

"Why, mother, what can you say of his father, deacon of our church, and" —

"Yes, and owner of a distillery, and father of a son who undoubtedly will die a drunkard; and I have a presenti-

ment that if Alida Blythe marries him, she never will be blithe again."

"Oh! mother, how can you say so. But pray do not object now; you know he has his father's consent, and you as much as told the old deacon, that you would give yours, and so the day has been fixed upon."

"Yes, I acknowledge that I did not object to him as I should have done; but how could I tell the man from whose hands I receive the wine-cup at communion, that I objected because his son indulged in an article manufactured by his own father? I thought it, but I had not independence enough to speak it."

"Why should you speak it? I am sure that Nat is no worse than all the young men; they all drink a little at such times as Fourth of July, and at huskings, and quiltings, and sleigh-rides, and nobody thinks any the worse of them. I am sure it is fashionable, and I don't think it would look very well for a girl to say that she would not marry a man because he sometimes took a social glass. You know, mother, everybody uses it; there is parson White, our good old minister, always has a mug of flip for us when we go to spend a winter's evening with him. If there was anything wrong in it, I am sure he would not use spirituous liquor."

"Wrong, Alida! can you see nothing wrong in it? Have you forgotten the death of your own father?"

"No, mother, but that was an extreme case. Very few die as he did. And you know, mother, what a very good father he was——when he did not drink. Nat has never

been overcome, only once or twice, and he promises that he never will get so after we are married."

"Yes, I know he does, but, notwithstanding his promises, he never can get my consent, and if he marries my daughter without a thorough reform, it will be without my approbation."

"Why, mother, we have fixed the day, and you would not have me break my engagement, would you?"

"Yes, until he not only promises, but actually reforms."

This conversation took place forty-three years ago this very month of March, 1855.

There have been great changes in the world since that day.

CHAPTER II.

Vermont in Olden Times—Times Past and Present—Poor Mike; a Poor Boy, but not a Poor Character—How "Outcasts" are Made—A Scene with Mike and Alida—A Letter, and its Contents—Gratitude Illustrated—Conspiracy overheard, and Villainy Frustrated—Murder Attempted—An Escape—Tapping the Hardware—Scenes with "Old Fox," the Custom House Officer, and the Wagoner—Smugglers' Tricks—The Cunning of Old Fox Outwitted by Dr. Field—The First and Last Kiss.

IF Vermont, in the year 1812, had had the same law it has in 1855, Theron Blythe had not died of poison imbibed from Deacon Brandon's distillery, and Mrs. Blythe a year after would not have been pleading with her daughter not to marry the distiller's son.

Oh how the spirit of the mother rejoices now as it looks down upon that State to see what a change has come over the land.

The death of her husband had left her to struggle through life with an only child, left dependent upon her by the early death of the husband and father, who, by industry, sobriety, and close attention to business during the few years of their residence in that new country, and by the increase which improvement and settlement always gives to the value of new land, would have soon made them comfortably and independently situated in a quiet home,

where she had hoped to enjoy the presence of her daughter a few years more at least, but above all, before she should throw herself into the arms of a man, of whom Mrs. Blythe seemed to have a presentiment of evil.

But to all her mother's arguments, Alida had one reply, that Nat was one of the most respectable men of her acquaintance, against whom her mother could not bring one single charge, except that he did just as every other young man in the country did ; and then she would inquire "if her mother expected her to wait for that miracle to happen, a suitor who never indulged himself in what all his companions did—a moderate use of alcoholic beverages?"

This was almost an unanswerable argument, for at that period, the Washingtonian reformation had not commenced : Sons of Temperance were truly a "secret society," for the secret of their existence and their power to do good, if no other than to furnish just such girls with a miracle in the shape of a husband who did not indulge in what was supposed to be so very harmless—moderate drinking—had not yet been developed.

At that day, if a man had advocated a prohibitory law, he would have been read out of church by the members, and pelted with rotten eggs by the outsiders. Or if he had predicted that in less than half a century the people of the State of Vermont would pass such a law, he would have been arrested upon a complaint of lunacy, and overseers appointed to keep him from "fooling away his property" in such a hopeless crusade as that of stopping good old Deacon Brandon, and all his kith and kin, from poisoning his neigh-

bors, destroying such useful men as Theron Blythe, or murdering such worthless ones as Zef Tharp.

But that change has come, and such "Green-Mountain Girls" as Alida Blythe can find husbands, though they do not always choose such, who do not even indulge in a "social glass," who are not "inveterate drinkers," and who do not on "extraordinary occasions," get drunk.

But that was not the case fifty years ago, and Nat Brandon was as good as his fellows, so far as Alida could see, and the son of one of the most respectable men, and intimate companion of the son of the pastor of "our church," and withal, a gay, fine looking young man, full of expressions of the most ardent affection and enduring love, to the sweet, confiding, innocent Alida, then nearly twenty-one years old, and as unsuspecting of man's perfidy, as her own pet fawn, which she had found in the woods, and brought, nestled upon her bosom, from its forest home to her own; where now, it was never so happy, as when following her in all her walks, or when she sat down upon the grass, laying by her side with its head in her lap.

It was while thus situated one day, that she received a visit from Mike Granly, who, as the neighbors said, was always everywhere, and to whom all the hen-roost robberies were sure to be charged; and, of course, all the melons and fruit stolen, were not stolen by Blythe White, Nat Brandon, Scale Williams, or John Longwood, and other scions of "first families," so long as there was a Mike Granly, to bear their sins, like the scape-goat, into the wilderness of oblivion.

Poor Mike ; undoubtedly he was sometimes guilty of little peccadillos, but did it never occur to his accusers that he must have had the stomach of an elephant, and digestive powers of an ostrich, to dispose of all the eatables and drinkables, laid to his charge. Fatherless and motherless, neglected and abused, with no one to care for him, and no one to speak a kind word for him, is it any wonder that he should be an outcast from society, when all its members seemed intent upon making him so. Had some one taken him, and given him a home and instruction, and acted the part of a father towards him, he would have made a good member of society, for he had a good and grateful heart. It was this that had brought him here at this time. All the morning he had been watching an opportunity ; hoping Alida would come out as she frequently did, to sit and read, or work, by the side of a rock, upon each side of which there was a rural seat, one constructed upon the sunny side for winter, and one upon the other in the shade for summer ; an overhanging projection serving as a roof in case of a sudden shower. It was a romantic place, a favorite spot, and it had been made clear and pleasant by the unsolicited labor of Mike, and he had done it out of pure love of doing good to one who had always been kind to him, and had always spoken to him as though she supposed he was possessed of a heart and soul like her own. By the side of this very rock, she had spent hours, days, weeks, months, if all the hours were counted, in teaching lessons to Mike, that he could not learn at the old log school-house, down by hemlock pond ; because, as he was nobody's son, nobody





“It was a romantic place, a favored spot, and it had been made clear and pleasant by the unsolicited labor of Mike, and he had done it out of pure love of doing good to one who had spent hours, days, weeks, months, if all the hours were counted, in teaching him lessons that he could not learn at the old log school-house, down by hemlock pond.—PAGE 48.

cared whether he went to school or not, and if he did, none of the nobodies who taught the school for "eight dollars a month, and boarded round," felt under any obligation to teach him, because he had no rich father to pay his schooling, and furnish board ; nor widow, with a pretty daughter, to furnish courting stock for the school-master ; and so Mike's education was sadly neglected, until taken in hand by Alida, who found him such an apt boy, that he soon got so much ahead of others of his own age, that when he went to school the next winter, he was the surprise of the "school committee-men," and the envy of the "big boys," and finally, when he proved himself an over-match for the erudition of the "school-master," his presence became so hateful to him, that he "declared he would leave the school, if that intolerable bad boy, was allowed to attend."

But, as he could not ferret out any one thing that he had done, except to tell boys things that the teacher could not, the committee decided that they could not discharge him, although they expressed the opinion "that it was to be deplored that a boy like Mike, who had no possible way of rising in the world, should become so proficient in figures, and such an excellent penman, as it might enable him to do a great deal of mischief in the world." Not one of them said to the other, "this is a very extraordinary bright boy, let us take charge of him, and give him a good education, and he will make a very useful man."

Alida had been seated by her favorite rock some minutes, so deeply engaged in reading a letter, that she did not hear

Mike's footsteps, or know that she was not alone, until he spoke—

“ Good morning, Miss Blythe.”

She started, blushed, and tried to hide the letter in her book, before she answered the salutation, as though she had been caught in some wrong action. At length she said :—

“ Why, Mike, is that you ; what brings you here, with your formal ‘ Miss Blythe ? ’ You have forgotten that you asked the privilege, and that I cheerfully granted it to you, always to call me your dear Miss Alida.”

“ Yes, I know it, and shall always feel grateful to you, and I hope I shall have the opportunity frequently to call you so, but ”——

“ But what ? What will hinder you ; are you going away, or what is the matter ? I never saw you look so serious before.”

“ Yes, I am going away ; I would have gone before now, if I knew where to go, for I begin to feel that I never shall be anything here ; and if you leave the valley, I shall not have a friend left who will care whether I am dead or alive.”

“ If I go ? Why, what do you mean, Mike ? ”

“ Oh ! it is no use to deny it, Miss Alida, you were reading that letter when I came round the rock, making a proposition to you, to go off with Nat Brandon, into Canada, to get married, because your mother is so much opposed to the match ; and it is that which has brought me here to see

you, and beg you not to go ; for I tell you harm will come of it if you do."

"Why, how you talk; what do you know about the letter?"

"Just as much, as though I wrote it, and a great deal more about its wicked meaning than you do. It is a trap for you !"

"A trap, Mike ; you are very much mistaken, it is a very honorable proposition, from an honorable man, and it is clear that you know nothing about it ; and I am afraid that you have leagued with all others, who are throwing every obstacle in the way of my happiness. I did hope that you would never prove ungrateful."

"And I never will. It may not be gratifying to hear the truth, but if I tell it to you, that does not prove me to be ungrateful."

"But, Mike, you do not know anything about the matter, and it is no use to talk about things you cannot understand. You are but a boy ; as you grow up you will learn some things."

"Miss Alida, if I am but a boy, I have learned some things lately that I can understand, and I did hope to be able to make you understand them too, but I find I am an unwelcome news-bearer."

"Well, Mike, what is the news ; why do you not tell it to me, if it is of any consequence."

"Simply, because you would not allow me, but grew impatient, and told me that I knew nothing, or did not understand anything about a matter, which was to you one of the most importance in all your life."

"Well, well, I will not get impatient again, but will listen to all you have to say, and then if it is true, I can tell better whether you know anything that is of any importance to me or not. Now, what are you going to tell me first, of your budget of news, that will prove most startling."

"I will tell you the contents of that letter to begin with."

"Ha! ha! ha! well, that to be sure would be news, seeing that I have just become acquainted with its contents myself, and if you have ever read it, it must have been before I did, and so your news would be like that of some newspapers—always of a second hand character."

"Indeed, I never saw that letter before, inside or out, and the glance I got at it in your hand, was not sufficient to give me any idea of the handwriting. I only know it was blue paper, such as the smugglers bring from Canada, and I know that Nat Brandon never lacks anything that they have, and some folks think how he gets his goods. But no matter about that now."

"No, not now; but if you will tell me one sentence it contains, I will listen to anything else you have to tell."

"I don't know as I can tell the words, but I will tell you who wrote it, and the substance of the contents."

"Very well, if you do, I will even show you the letter, in acknowledgment of your correctness, and certainly very remarkable penetration."

"I will not ask that; I will take your word. First, then, it was written by Nat Brandon, and it states that he has had an interview with your mother, and she has posi-

tively refused her consent to your marriage, at least at present, and that his father now has got his back up ; that is the word."

"So it is. By whatever way, witchcraft or otherwise, you have got your information, you are certainly in possession of the secret. There, take the letter and read it—read aloud, and then I will hear what you have to offer.

"MY DEAR ALIDA :

"You are the only one of your sex I ever loved as I do you—the only one I ever felt as though I could marry, love, cherish, and live with forever. Oh! I cannot live without you—will not live—if I am to be deprived of my fondest anticipations for years past. I have often told you that I loved you better than my own life, that I could live with and for you, and die for you, but that I could not live without you : and now it has come to that severe trial.

"I have just had an interview with your mother, and she will not give her consent, at any rate, not yet awhile, and will not promise that she ever will.

"This I told to father, and now he has got his back up, and says I ought to be ashamed of myself to offer to marry the daughter of a man who died drunk."

"Died drunk ! I wonder if he ever thought who owned the distillery that caused your father's death. Ashamed, indeed, I wish he was half good enough for you, but he is not. And I do not believe that any boy that is brought up to the business of whisky-making can ever be good, until he quits the debasing occupation."

"Well, well, Mike, never mind that now—read on."

Michael continued the letter :

"So, I suppose we must postpone our wedding day again."

"Again!" said he, in astonishment, "why, have you ever postponed it?"

"Yes, twice before; once he was sick, and once he was called away very suddenly to go to Canada."

"When was that?"

"That was the time when his father's cattle were stolen."

"Father's cattle stolen! Why, Miss Alida, are you really so unsuspecting as to think that drove of cattle were stolen, and driven over the line unknown to the owner?"

"Certainly. I never suspected anything else. Were they not stolen?"

"Bless your soul, no. I helped drive them away, and Nat went over to get the money. His father said that was of much more importance than getting married—he could do that any time."

"Without a thought of the sorrow and woe of hope deferred it might cause any one else to feel. That is too much the opinion of all men, that they can get married any time."

"It is a pity that some of them do not always put it off. I wish somebody would, for your sake."

"Why, Mike, I do not understand why you are so opposed to our marriage, since it has been determined on so long."

"On your part."

"On my part. What is the meaning of that? Is it not equally so on his, do you think?"

"No, I do not ; I know it is not."

"Ah, Mike, you are mistaken. Read the remainder of the letter, and you will see."

"I know what it is ; he proposes that in consequence of the opposition of parents, that you shall go over the line and get married in Canada. Would you go among the enemies of the country—go among the people we are fighting with, to solemnize this most important act of your whole life ? Though, if it was really to get married, it would perhaps be excusable ; but take care Miss Alida, that you are not deceived in this as much as you are about the deacon's loss of cattle."

"How ? What about them ?"

"Why, you see it would be smuggling to drive cattle into Canada to feed our enemies, and so those engaged in the business, go down in the state and buy them and drive them up here on the Deacon's farm, and then the first dark night the folks from the other side come over and steal them."

"Well, Mike, you do not think, I hope, that any one will steal me."

"What better than stealing would it be, to get you over there and have that scapegrace son of good old Parson White to act the counterfeit, and perform the ceremony of marriage, which you are to be told must be kept secret, till the old folks get reconciled to it."

"Oh, Mike, I will not believe that the world holds such wickedness. You are making up this story. How can you invent such tales ?"

"I do not ; I tell only what I know ; and because I believe

that whisky drinking is capable of making men brutes, worse than brutes, and guilty of crimes that would have put savages to the blush."

"Why, Mike, you have very lately become a strong advocate of temperance, do you practise as well as you preach?"

"I hope so, and if I do not forget the good advice of you and your mother, I hope I always shall."

"I hope so. But how did you hear what you have told me if indeed you ever did?"

"Indeed I did, and I will tell you the truth. You know, Miss Alida, what a poor friendless wretch I have always been, living without a home, sleeping in barns in summer, and in the old distillery in winter, and always ready to do a dirty act of villainy for those who ought to teach me better; for they know better, than to corrupt a poor boy, who never found a friend until he found one in you and your mother, who have opened my eyes till I have looked upon my own nakedness with as much shame as our first parents did upon theirs."

"Why, Mike, it was only yesterday that you acknowledged to mother that you had been drinking again."

"I know it; and whose fault was it? Who tempted, coaxed, ridiculed and made fun of me as a cold water boy—a reformed drunkard—a slave—under the influence of petticoat government—and everything to prevail upon me to drink—to just taste it, and finally, when I would not, they poured it down my throat, and then, instead of sympathy for me, what did I meet with? Everybody says there's Mike Granley drunk again—so much for his promise to re-

form. Even your mother, all but you, reviled me for getting drunk, and you, yes you, would not believe that that gang of young devils, who rob and murder—yes, murder—have you forgot how I told you, that old Zep. Sharp died—that such nice young men as Nat, Blythe, Scale and John, and a few more could be guilty of such things. You would not believe that they made me drunk, and I felt as though it was no use for me to try any more to avoid an inevitable fate ; I thought I would go over to the old still-house and drink enough to end my miserable life.”

“ What prevented you ? ”

“ What I heard. My love for you—your mother—the debt of gratitude I owe you—the thought of how your father died ; how I used to go and get his bottle filled and hide it for him ; and then I thought to live to make amends for my wicked, miserable drunken folly. All this run through my mind while I lay quirked up in an old hogshead in one corner of the still-house, until I resolved that I never would drink again, and I would keep out of the influence of those who would make and always keep me a drunkard. And with this good resolution on my mind, I went to sleep, thinking that I would get up in the morning and leave this part of the country without letting a soul know where I had gone ; and I would have done so, but when I waked I heard your name—somebody was talking about you ; pretty soon I found that it was the four who are always plotting together and I listened to the whole plan ; how Nat was to write you this letter ; how Blythe White was to personate the minister ; and when you thought you were married, as a

matter of course, you would give up the thousand dollars left you by your grand-mother, and with that they were going into a grand smuggling operation, and make a fortune for each of them."

"Oh, Mike, I cannot believe this story. You have dreamed it all."

"I wish I could believe so ; but if you had got such a thrashing as I did, you would be satisfied that some part of my night's experience was not a dream."

"A thrashing ! What for ? Who thrashed you ? Tell me all the truth."

"All of them ; and all because they thought I had overheard their conversation ; and I do believe that they would have murdered me, for they had got the bottle ready to pour the scalding hot whisky down my throat when they were interrupted, and then they made me get down upon my knees and swear that I had not heard what they had been talking about."

"But you had, Mike."

"I know I had, though not all ; but I swore to save my life ; and perhaps yours ; was that wicked, Miss Alida ?"

"Well, well, I do not know ; it is too nice a question for me ; you know you should always tell the truth."

"So I do ; I always have since you taught me how much better it is to speak the truth than it is to lie."

"How were they interrupted ?"

"By the arrival of Dr. Field, who you know is constantly engaged in the smuggling business, and Nat and the old deacon, and the rest of them are not much better. The doc-

tor, at first, I think did not know me, and so he played, drunk, and pretended that he had just stopt to get a drink ; but I knew him, and knew that he never got drunk, and that if I could only get him to recognize me, I was safe ; for if he is a smuggler, he is a man, and one of the best sort too.

“ Presently he asked Nat if the whisky he had engaged was put up, and Nat said ‘all right,’ and then I knew what was afoot, for that is a countersign among the smugglers.

“ The doctor said then, ‘I will take it down to-night, as my wagon is coming along empty.’ I thought to myself, then I will go in the same conveyance somehow, if I can get away from these wretches.

“ How I was to accomplish this I did not see, for Scale and John held me fast, and I knew if I said anything they would lie me down, but I kept a bright watch, and waited my time.

“ Nat told the doctor that all was ready but that that young whelp had been hiding there, and had probably seen how the casks were fixed, and he thought they had better put him where he would not tell tales.

“ The doctor was a smuggler, but not a villain. His quick perception however saw at a glance that he might as well put the others where they would tell no tales, so he said to them ‘go ahead’. It had been hinted to the doctor, that these cronies knew more of the death of old Zef Tharp than they would like to tell, and it occurred to him that he was sometimes entrusting a little too much to men who would not be any too good to tell tales upon him, whenever they could make a haul large enough to pay cost ; so he thought

if he could get them to commit themselves in an attempt to take life, he could hold them in check ever after. It was for this that he said 'go ahead, you know how to work it I suppose—all right—give him a drink—that'll keep him quiet—what has he done?'

" 'Playing the spy, and that is death, you know, in our code.'

" 'True ! but have you ever carried it so far, or is this the first case ?'

" 'Oh, no, we have shut up ugly mouths before this one, about the old still-house.'

" 'I really began to think now, that my time had come.'

" 'And were you not afraid of death, Michael, did you beg for life ?'

" 'No ; why should I ? You have always told me that God is just, and that he punishes us every day for our sins, and that after death we shall be happy. I am not afraid to die, though I wish to live. I should like to live to be somebody in the world, besides the poor, friendless beggar boy I have always been.'

" 'Friendless, Mike ? Friendless ?'

" 'No, no, Miss Alida ; I take that back. You have always been a friend to me ; you have taught me to look up, be honest, truthful, kind, and then I shall not always be the poor, despised thing I ever have been, ever since I can remember ; just because I was poor and alone in the world, everybody but you is always trying to put me down, instead of lifting me up and helping me along in the world. I was not afraid, because you have always told me not to

be afraid of anything but my own wicked acts ; and as I had not done anything wrong, why should I be afraid ? Still, I had no doubt but that they intended to take my life ?”

“ Oh, no, it must have been only to frighten you.”

“ Frighten me ! Alida Blythe, you do not know me. I am a poor boy, one that society calls an outcast, but I have never done an act to make me fear death. I have never plotted the ruin of an unprotected, virtuous girl. That is a crime, by the side of which murder sinks into insignificance. That was a crime more worthy of death than the one they pretended that I had been guilty of ; overhearing their plottings of villainy.”

“ But it was because they thought you had learned the secrets of smuggling.”

“ No, it was not. They knew full well that I knew every one of the company, and all their tricks, and could blow them any moment, if I would. No, it was not that. They had not packed the hardware that night, and knew that I could not inform if I would, but they thought I might tell the truth to you. It was for what I had heard about you, that they wanted to put me out of the way ; but it would not do to tell Dr. Field that story, and so they trumped up the other. And as to my seeing how the barrels had been filled, I don't know that it would be a crime to see how the thing was done, but it is a crime more worthy of death than some for which life is taken, to fill barrels in distilleries with such stuff as they are often filled.”

“ Why so ?”

"Because, not content with the native poison of the liquor, the most virulent poisons are added. What did Deacon Brandon want of twenty pounds of *Nux vomica*, the stuff that we use to kill wolves with, that I got for him the last time I was in Montreal, if it was not to put in the whisky? I could tell you a dozen secrets of whisky-making, that would make you stare, I guess."

"Well, never mind that now, Mike, but tell me how you got clear of your tormentors, for it is very evident that they did not kill you, notwithstanding you appeared to me just now a good deal like a spirit."

"Oh, I see you do not believe that they intended to take my life; but I am sure they would if it had not been for Dr. Field; for they talked the matter all over with him, how easy it would be, as I was a drunken scamp, and it had been often predicted that I should die some day just like old Zep Tharp."

"'Very likely—he is in a fair way for it,' said Dr. Field."

"Somehow, I thought there was something in the tone of his voice that meant more than they understood from his words, and I thought I might appeal to him and save my life. Blythe White would not harm me, or do a mean thing when he is sober, but when is he ever so? He is continually under the influence of liquor, and as easily managed by the others as a child. He does just what they tell him, and is no more accountable for his acts than any other senseless human being; only that he has no business to muddle his own brain and destroy his reason, and the good heart that God gave him. Blythe and Scale Williams

were holding me, and John Longwood, or Nat, had the bottle ready to pour the scalding liquor down my throat."

"Oh, not Nat. Say it was not Nat; he would not do such a wicked thing."

"Well, I don't know about that; he had a hand in it; and it would not have been much wickeder than the plan I had overheard about you."

"Oh! I cannot believe that—you must have dreamed it—but how did you get away?"

"I begged for my life and prayed, and promised to leave the country, if they would let me go; but it was no use—they were drunk—and what avail is it to appeal to the reason or common sense of drunken men—crazy drunk—for then they will do things they would shudder at when sober."

"That is true; and all you heard about me must have been the wild concoctions of brains maddened by liquor."

"I should like to know if such brains are any more fit to make serious proposals of marriage, than they are to get up wild concoctions. Oh! Miss Alida, have a care. Listen while I repeat your own words, which I heard you use when Scale Williams was about to marry Jane Robinson.

" 'When a girl begins to make excuses for the drunkenness of her lover, she is past reasoning with. She has made up her mind to take the leap in the dark, and trust fate for the result.' "

"But I am not making excuses for anybody. You are quite mistaken, Mike. But never mind that now; go on with your story. If they were so intoxicated and so bad as you say, I do not understand how you got away alive."

"I told you Dr. Field was there."

"Yes, but you said he was drunk also."

"No, he only pretended to be so. And he did not believe at first that they intended to hurt me ; but when I found they were determined to pour the whole bottlefull down my throat, I begged them to give me time to say a prayer—that beautiful prayer that you taught me to say—but Blythe said, 'Take a drink first, you will pray all the better. My father never prays worth a' — I won't repeat the oath—'until he gets a dram ahead ; and he always takes a hot whisky punch just before going to bed, and then the way he prays is a caution ; of course you cannot refuse to follow his excellent example ; so open your mouth—here is the hot whisky, and we will make the punch down your throat.'

"I begged and prayed, but it was no use, till at length I caught the eye of Dr. Field, and then—I don't know why—but I thought he looked as though he would help me in my emergency. They only held me by the coat, which I knew was pretty rotten. I made a spring, leaving the collar with them, while I pitched head foremost into Dr. Field's arms. They tried to pull me back by the legs, but he said, 'Hold on—why, who is this boy ? Is this Mike, my old cattle driver ? True, I would trust this boy with a million. He brought my saddle bags once all the way from Montreal, stuffed with money, when I was afraid to carry them myself. I tell you what it is, boys, you cannot hurt Mike, while I am here. Besides, he is just the boy I want to-night. I want him to go down and tell "Old Fox" that

there is a load of whisky on the road, and that there is some smuggling going on, and perhaps he can make a haul if he keeps a sharp watch. I will tell the driver to try to run by, and of course he will be overhauled and then—I must fool that fellow once more.’

“So after a long talk, they concluded to let me off this time, but if they ever caught me about the old still-house again, ‘Yes, or anywhere else,’ Scale Williams whispered to me, ‘curse you, I will cut your throat, you infernal hound.’”

“So you went off with Dr. Field; and how did he succeed?”

“I went ahead and called ‘Old Fox’ up, about two o’clock last night, and told him just as the doctor instructed me; that I had been asleep in an empty cask in the still-house, and that Dr. Field came there and loaded up some barrels of whisky, which he said he was going to take down to Bellows Falls, and I thought there was something queer about their loading it in the night, and so I thought I would creep out sly and run down here and let him know.”

“‘Why, Mike,’ says he, ‘I thought you belonged to the smugglers. How is this? you need not come here thinking to fool me with your made up stories, I am not a bit afraid of their trying to run any more goods, inside of whisky barrels. I have cured them of that trick. If there is anything in your story about the whisky, it is only a decoy, to draw me off from something else on the road. But I rather think the whole story is one of your lies; for they do say, you can beat the father of lies, at his own trade.’”

"Now, Miss Alida, am I such a liar, and so bad a boy?"

"No, Mike ; to me, at least heretofore, you have always been truthful ; but you have got a bad name, in this neighborhood, and it is an old saying, that a dog may as well be mad, as to be called so."

"So I think ; and that it is no use to try to win a good name here, and I mean to go where I can—where nobody will call me a bad boy, because I have been so. I should think they might forget old scores, and let me be good, when I try so hard to mend my life."

"You forget, Mike, that you was lying last night, and helping Dr. Field to cheat the custom-house. Smuggling is a crime."

"Very well, I did not want to do it. Dr. Field saved my life, and I felt bound to do all he asked me. Did you not tell me, that gratitude was one of the first duties of a Christian? Besides, he is going to help me to go away from here. I am to meet him to-night, and he will give me money, and a letter to his brother, in York State, and if I live, I will be somebody ypt, when these old still-house loafers are nobody ; see if I don't. I should have kept right on last night, but I could not leave the valley, without seeing you once more, perhaps for the last time on earth."

"Oh, I trust we shall meet again. I hope you have not told Dr. Field all you have told me about this plot. Oh, I will not believe it ; you must be mistaken. But never mind that, go on with your story about Old Fox."

"'And if I do find it is a lie,' says he, 'I will give you such an all-fired licking as you never had in all your life,

you young imp of Satan. Hallo, what has become of your coat collar ? Been robbing some hen-roost, and got caught and cleared yourself as Joseph did, by leaving part of your coat behind. You are a regular scamp. Why don't you reform ?"

"Reform ! now tell me, Miss Alida, is that the way to reform a poor boy ?"

"No ! it is not. It is the way to harden him in sin—to make him reckless—to make him feel degraded and careless of what he does—to make him think it is no use to try to be better, as he gets no credit for it. But go on,"

"Just then, we heard the wagon coming down spring hill, and I said, very well, if I have not told you the truth, you may whip me to your heart's content ; but not as hard I hope, as they did."

"Oh, oh ! now I understand. Some of the smugglers have been giving you a little, of what you need a great deal of, and you want to pay them off with a little ingratitude. Well, revenge is sweet. Here is a dollar for you, and if it turns out as I expect, I will give you five."

"So we started off down the road, beyond his house, about half a mile, on that narrow bridge, and squatted down behind a log. Pretty soon we heard the wagoner creeping along by the house, over the ridge, and just as he thought he was far enough, he laid on the whip, and said, 'come now, make up for lost time ; old fellows.'"

"Oh, said Old Fox, you thought you had got so far away that the rattle of the wagon wheels would not waken me. You did not know, I suppose, that I slept on this bridge

every night? Come turn about, and go back up to the house, I can store your load for you.'

" 'Why cap'in, I ha'nt got nothing under heavens but whisky—Deacon Brandon's whisky. I han't been to Canada—'pon my honor. You may sarch every barrel in welcome. I've got a gimlet.' "

" 'Ha ! ha ! ha ! You are very green, or else very cute. You are a new hand on the road, that is certain. No, no, tapping won't do ; I have had enough of that game ; I must have the bungs out.'

" 'Why, how on earth are you going to do that ? They a'n't put in as we do cider-barrel bungs, down to Randolph, with some husks. And I don't know how you'll get 'em out, 'thout you bore 'em out. But a'n't tapping just as good ? I've got a straw, and you can have a taste all round ; but I tell you what it is, squire, I'll be blasted to tarnation, if you'll find anything but whisky, mind I tell you ; and if you don't find anything else, I 'spose you will give me a certificate of search, won't you ? that'll pass along down, 'cause I 'spected to be stopped somewhere, but the boys told me I had better try and get by you if I could, 'cause you is more particular than some on 'em.'

" 'They do, ha ! Well, there is need of it with some of you smugglers.'

" 'Lord, squire, you don't mean me, I hope ; I'm no smuggler : I am only Jim Arnold, that lives down to Randolph, and hadn't much on hand this spring, and just thought I'd come up and get a load of whisky, and make a spec out of the job. Ain't that all right ?'

“ ‘Oh ! yes, if it is all true. But I can soon tell. Is this your own whisky ?’

“ ‘Why, sartain, squire, what made you ask that ? Nothing wrong I hope, about Deacon Brandon selling it, is there ? I paid good money for it. A hundred dollar bill on the old Hartford Bank, and here is one they gave me in change ; I wish you would look at that by your lantern, and see if it is good, ’cause I’m peskey ’fraid of your money up along the line here. They do say old Stephen Burrows, makes a sight of it, just as pretty as the real genuine.’

“ ‘Oh ! yes, that is good. Now, let me see if your whisky is equally good ; let me have your whip. I can start these bungs with the butt-end of that hickory whip stock. Mike, hold that lantern.’

“ ‘At it he went, hammering away, and started all the bungs, and tried all the liquor with a proof glass, and fastened them up again, and said he believed they were all right, and gave the fellow a certificate, and he drove on whistling, while we plodded back to the house. He seemed surprised, because I would not drink, and said he thought I was a real toper—everybody said I was.

“ ‘Just as we got up to the gate, we met Dick, the squire’s hired man.

“ ‘ ‘Why, squire, where on arth have you been ? A wagon has just gone by, and turned down the back road lick-a-ter-cut, and by gum, I believe it was Doctor Field’s gray mare. There she goes over the bridge, three feet up at once.’

“ ‘ ‘Confusion. That stupid Randolph fool has been sent along with a load of whisky, just to draw me off the track.

What a ninny I must have been, not to have thought of it at first. Put the saddle on my Jim horse, quicker than lightning, and I will follow him ten miles, but what I will have him. Come, hurrah !'

"Down he went to the bridge, as fast as he could ride, but his Jim horse would not go on. He whipped and kicked and swore, but the horse would not move, and he got off to see what was the matter, and there, behold, half the planks were shoved off into the river. Didn't he come back foam-ing mad. He never suspected me though, but told me to go to bed and sleep till breakfast-time ; and so I did, and then came up here to look for you.

"And so the doctor got by with his goods, while Old Fox was running after and tasting of the fellow's whisky. That is about as much good, as ever comes of going after the wretched products of the still-house.

"As to that, it is my opinion the goods after all, were in the whisky barrels, somehow, or else what did them fellows mean by telling Doctor Field, that I knew all about how they were fixed. I wish I did ; I should like to tell Old Fox that he's not cunning enough to catch a weasel asleep.

"I don't understand about these tricks of smuggling. But if men studied half as hard to be good, as they do to be rogues, we should have very few of the latter. I do wish we had peace again, for it appears to me the times have a constant tendency to make everybody dishonest, and we are in continual fear that some of our best friends may be corrupted, besides the woe of hundreds of widows and

orphans, that will be left to mourn the folly of this wicked war."

"You and Nat would not agree very well upon that point. He thinks the war is glorious, and prays to have it continue, and so does his father."

"Yes, I know he does. That is the only point upon which we disagree. He got very angry at me about what I said, one day last week, and said he would be revenged upon me. I laughed at him, at the idea of being revenged upon a woman, because she had the best of the argument. He went off in a pet, but he soon came back again. That is the way with all the men; they cannot stay away from us, Mike. I dare say you will be just so."

"I hope I shall never be like him; but I hope if you do marry him, that you never will see the time when you will want to come to me for a shelter: but if you do, I hope I shall have it to give, and here I swear by this rock, that if you should ever be in want, I will share the last crust of bread with you, for you have been so good, so kind to me, that I shall always feel grateful—shall always love you with a pure, holy affection, though we may never meet again on earth. Good bye—God bless you!"

"Michael, why, Michael Granly, you are not going so?"

It was the first time, perhaps, that he had ever been called so kindly—affectionately, by his proper name. He hardly knew that he had any name but Mike. It was something new for him to be spoken to in such a kind, real affectionate manner. He turned to look, to look one last, fond look at the only being who had ever sympathized with

his misery ; and such a look met him as he had never seen, nor felt before. Yes, felt, for looks are felt—he felt hers.

He felt the magnetic power of a tear shed for him at the simple word “good bye.” It was the first he had ever felt, and it went down with magnetic force and speed into his heart, and nestled there, and from that moment, Mike Granly had a new heart. For the first time in his life he felt the softening influence of love—holy, happy, glorious love. The love of man, for an angel. He knew that she was in a sphere above him, but why should he not look up to her and love her. May not a dog look up and love his master ? How often has the slave loved him who had the right by law to sell his body, and tear that affection forcibly asunder, for a whim, for revenge, or for money, to lavish upon some other slave. Why then should this boy not look up to Alida and love her ? She was but five years his senior. True, he was a poor, friendless boy ; but he had a heart, and that heart was a human one, and was now beating with the pulsations of early manhood, and he loved an angel ; one whose every act had taught him to love her, and now when he was about to part with her for ever, he saw the tears coming down her crimson cheeks, and her eyes, those soft, blue eyes, gave him such a look, and her words “you are not going so,” made him do what he never would have dared to do, under any other circumstances.

What ?

He dropped on his knee by her seat—it was a sudden impulse, quick as thought, and as quickly executed. It was a kiss of pure affection, springing from an honest heart.

Did she resent it, or frown upon the audacity of the boy. No ; she returned his kiss, pressed his hand, and would have said good bye, but before she could find her voice, he was gone.

CHAPTER III.

Another actor in the same scene—Alida's surprise—Interview with Dr. Field—New developments—She needs a friend, and finds one in a smuggler—Dissertation upon distilling, duty and death, and its cause—Illustrations by the opening bud, the Canada thistle, the curling smoke, and magnetic power—A kiss, and what of it.

ALIDA wiped away a holy tear, and looked up to say the parting word to one, who she felt loved her, and was parting with her, perhaps for ever.

But Michael had already gone ; and she uttered a scream of surprise, for, in the place of that poor boy stood a stranger, a fine-looking gentleman, of middle age, with an intelligent face, and keen black eye, with an expression of that peculiar sort, that seems to look into the very heart of whoever it is fixed upon.

Alida fairly quailed before it, and sprang to her feet, as if stung by a rattlesnake where she sat. Michael had gone around the rock one way, while the stranger had approached her by the opposite, so that neither had seen the other, and Alida had thought the step was that of Michael, for she held her handkerchief to her eyes, and did not know for a moment after Michael had left her, that she was not alone, till she heard a strange voice say, " Good morning, miss."

It was no wonder that she started, but one look suffice^d

to tell her, that she had nothing to fear, for he instantly added, "Don't be alarmed ; you are Miss Blythe, I presume, and I am Dr. Field. I had a little talk last night with a friend of yours—a poor boy, who spoke in the highest terms of you, for the many acts of kindness you have shown him, and I have promised to do something for him, provided your account of him is a favorable one."

"Yes, so he told me."

"He told you. Why, has he been here? I expected that he was fifteen miles from here before this time, where I promised to meet him to-day."

"Are you jesting, sir?"

"Jesting! I do not understand you, miss. I am not jesting. I speak seriously, and for an honest purpose."

"And did you not see that boy as you approached this spot?"

"Upon my word, no. I saw no one but yourself. I stood a single moment before I spoke, as you seemed to be absorbed in thought, and held your handkerchief over your eyes."

Alida felt a load of trouble and confusion sliding gently from her heart. She had given a farewell kiss to that poor boy—it was not an act to be ashamed of, but she blushed to think a stranger had seen it. Could she have foreseen the effect that it had upon him who received it, that it would be his guiding star through life—that from the moment it was given he had determined to live so that should they ever meet again, she would be willing to give another—she would not have blushed to own the act. As

it was, she felt a relief that it had not been witnessed, and she repeated the question :

"Is it possible, that he had got out of sight so quick ? It seems like a dream. Why, I thought you must have been both of you standing here at the same moment. He must have vanished suddenly."

"Do you speak of the boy they call Mike ? Was he really here so short a time since ?"

"Upon the very instant it seemed to me, that you spoke. I had but just said good-bye, and put my handkerchief to my face."

"Say to your eyes, to wipe a tear of sorrow for the poor fellow—an honest, friendless, orphan. I appreciate you all the more, and thank you most sincerely for what you have done for him, for I believe him a much better boy than he has ever had credit for ; I know he is honest."

"Yes, and never would have been drunken, or mischievous, only from bad example, and the influence of his associates. I am sure he is determined to reform now, if he can have a chance."

"He shall have a chance. I am going to give him a suit of clothes, and money enough to pay his expenses, and send him to my brother in the State of New York, who has a good farm, and is a good sober man, and will set him to work, and give him fair wages. I hope he is willing to work."

"Willing ! Look at this spot—this pleasant retreat."

"I have been admiring it ever since I arrived. It is fitted up with extreme taste, and does the owner credit."

"Not me. It is all the work of that boy. All in gratitude for the few school lessons I have given him."

"Is it possible. It is a wonder that such a rough casket should contain such a jewel of a mind as his. I suppose then, he can read. Can he write?"

"Yes sir, a handsome hand, and understands figures perfectly, and it is a real pleasure to hear him read, as I have, many an hour by the side of this rock, while I was busy with my needle."

"He will be invaluable to my brother, who is very much troubled with ophthalmia, and has to depend almost entirely upon one of his daughters to keep his accounts. As you have taken such an interest in this boy, I will assure you that I will put him in a position to make a man of himself."

"Oh, sir, I thank you, from my heart ;" and she extended her hand to him, with all the confidence she would have felt in an old acquaintance. Such is the power of benevolent actions, that two hearts engaged in the same good work long to be more closely united. She felt in a moment that Dr. Field, notwithstanding all the tales she had heard of his smuggling operations, could not be a bad man. And besides, he had taken an interest in a fellow being, for whom she had felt a deep solicitude, and at that very moment, it must be acknowledged, by his gratitude, kindness, good disposition, and above all, his undoubted love for her, had taken a place in her heart, that might have unseated her first love, if Mike had been of the same age and position in society, as Nat Brandon.

There is nothing softens a woman's heart—I mean a woman that has a heart—

“A heart to feel for other's woes,”

so quick as the love of an honest heart for her. It is the sympathetic action of our nature. It was the dream—“he loves me”—that absorbed her soul so that she did not notice the approach of Dr. Field. And then she thought, “Oh! if I only felt as sure of the love of Nat Brandon, as I do of the pure affection of that poor boy, how happy I should be.” She had thought this so intently, that she almost believed that Dr. Field had read her thoughts, and when he spoke of the subject that was upon her mind as he approached, she involuntarily exclaimed, “Oh, sir, did I think aloud?”

“No, Miss Blythe, not aloud; but then it was not difficult for a man of my experience, who has been for years engaged in the practice of medicine, and has endeavored to study human nature, to judge what a young lady's thoughts are, in such a romantic spot as this, when she has just been talking about the man to whom she is engaged to be married.”

“Sir. I do not understand you. Who says I am engaged to be married?”

“A very lying old lady—Madam Rumor.”

“Then I wish you would believe that she has lied in this instance, instead of believing so foolish a tale.”

“Come, come Miss Blythe, it is useless to deny it to me,

for I have come here on purpose to talk with you upon that subject."

"I do not understand what right you have, sir, to talk to me, upon a matter that does not concern you in the least. And particularly as we are strangers. I will return to the house, and if you have anything to say, you can say it in the presence of my mother."

"Very true. But, in the first place, you would rather listen to what I have to say here by yourself. Besides, your mother sent me here, knowing, or believing that I should find you alone. As to our being strangers, that is true, but let us become acquainted, and friends. Then I should have a right to talk to you. As to the fact that your marriage does not concern me, I answer you it does. I have a deep interest in it—a pecuniary interest."

"A pecuniary interest ! You surprise me, sir. I do not understand you. Will you explain yourself ?"

"Yes, since you request me to do so."

"I do certainly. You have excited my curiosity—a woman's curiosity."

"Which must be gratified. You are engaged to be married to Nat Brandon ?"

"Well, sir, you seem to speak positively, as though you knew ; so I suppose there is no occasion for me to deny it ; but I should like to know how you became acquainted with my family secrets."

"From one of the parties. He told me so, himself."

"Indeed ; are you so deep in his confidence that he intrusts all his affairs of love with you ?"

"I hope not all of them.

"What do you mean by that? Has he several on hand at the same time?"

"That I cannot answer, and it is quite unnecessary for me to do so now; it is only of your engagement with Nat Brandon that I have to speak. You ask me how it happens that he should have told me such a secret. I will be candid. You have, I believe, in your own right, a considerable legacy coming to you as soon as you are twenty-one years of age, which is now in a few days."

"Well, sir, you certainly seem to be well posted in my family affairs. Yes, I have one thousand dollars in prospect. Did Mr. Brandon tell you that, too?"

"He did; and that as soon as you were married, of course that would come into his hands."

"Not exactly; but that with it, and a little more added to it by Nat's father, we would purchase this little farm, and place the money at interest for my mother, and give her a home with us while she lived."

"And on the other hand he has promised to pay me a debt of long standing and considerable amount as soon as he came in possession of that money. Now am I not interested in your marriage?"

"And it is that that you have come here for, to urge me to hasten its consummation, that you might reap its advantages in the payment of an old debt, probably contracted in the unlawful pursuit which Madam Rumor says you are engaged in? Your motive is a base one."

"So you think, because you mistake it. Have I given

you any reason to think that such was my motive?—have I said a word to that effect? On the contrary, my sole object in coming here was to prevent the consummation of so base a project I should be glad to get my money—and it is an honest debt, fairly due—and I need it now in the prosecution of my business, be it what it may—at any rate it is as honest as that of a distiller—for I have lately met with some heavy losses.”

“Yes, in the hardware line, I think.”

“You are disposed to be a little sarcastic.”

“And you a little base, I fear.”

“Pray hear before you condemn. I came here on purpose to prevent the possibility of my being paid out of your money. I have nothing to say to hinder you from marrying this man, for where courtship has advanced so far, it is generally of but little use for parents or friends to interpose objections to the marriage. There is a sort of impossibility even on the part of the principals themselves, much more of friends, preventing the consummation of their most ardent desires. I am also aware that, in this case, your mother is opposed to the match, and that his father pretends to be, just to bring it about; and to avoid the objection of your mother a clandestine marriage has been proposed, to which you have listened favorably, knowing that she would be reconciled when she found that opposition was no longer of any avail.”

“And what do you know of what I have just been told, that if I consented to that clandestine course, deception would be practised upon me, and that I should only become

a partner in a pretended ceremony, performed by a counterfeit priest?"

"Nothing, upon my honor ; nor do I believe it. I do not think, and I speak candidly, and as I would to my own sister or daughter, that Nat Brandon is such a villain, though he is not exactly what he should be, or that he is as good as you deserve. He is, I fear a confirmed incubriate, but he may reform—and then——"

"Oh he will ; I am sure he will ; he says he will, as soon as we are married."

"If I was in your place, I should insist upon it, that he did that beforehand. He has some bad habits, and bad associates, but I cannot believe him base enough to be guilty of such an act as the deception you speak of. But if you will confide in me at the proper time, I will take care that you are not deceived, and I hope that you will not be disappointed in trusting that your influence will make a sober man of him. That influence is strong, I have reason to believe, or it would not have produced such an effect upon poor Mike. I know that female influence is powerful for good wherever it is used, and I wish it was exerted in a ten-fold stronger degree. Now to convince you that my motive is not, as you thought it, a base, mercenary one, I beg you not to let this marriage take place until after your birthday, and not until you have made a legal transfer of your money, or right of inheritance, to your mother, or any other friend who will hold it safe for you, until such a time as you require a re-transfer. If you defer this until after the marriage, you will then have no power to do so without the consent of your

husband ; in fact, he may get possession of it without your consent."

" But if I should do thus, it will imply distrust, or want of confidence in my betrothed husband."

" He need not know it—had better not know it."

" You are teaching me to practise deception."

" Not to any one's injury. If he proves worthy of your trust—if he does reform—if you find that he is ready to appropriate this money, as well as more from his father, to the object which you say he has agreed to, and not to the payment of my debt, or any other purpose, then you can have it so applied at once."

" But what would he think of me thus to put it out of my hands—and out of his reach—certainly that I distrusted him."

" No, not if you put it in the hands of your mother, for then you could say that that was the advice of counsel, as the shortest way of making payment for the farm."

" True, that would seem reasonable ; and I cannot see any wrong in it, but I can see wrong in my suspicion of you, that you were plotting to get possession of my money and that that was all the interest you felt in my marriage."

" That was very natural ; but no matter : you will then pursue my advice ?"

" Yes—but—that is—I had partly given my consent to go over the line and be married to-night."

" Why over the line ?"

" I do not know, except that he said he had a friend there who was a minister, that he wanted to perform the ceremony, and as I was sure my mother had made up her mind never

to consent, I did not know what else to do, since things have gone so far with us that I cannot retreat now. Come what will I must go ahead. I shall do my best to keep clear of the serpent which you think lies in our path. If Nat insists upon it to-night, I do not know what to say to put it off, since our wedding day has already been fixed a number of times, and might have taken place with the approbation of my mother then, but he put it off, as she says, for no honest, proper reason. And now, if I should postpone it, what will he say ?”

“ You shall not have that difficulty. He shall do it again himself : I will take care that he has other, and more important business to attend to to-night, as his father will tell him, than getting married.

“ You seem to have a strange influence over my fate, and subject me to your will as though I were a thing of your own creation. I have understood that one of the previous postponements was occasioned by you.”

“ Not intentionally ; for I never knew of the engagement until quite lately ; and I only propose now to be the means of postponing it to save you from the necessity of doing it yourself, and thus give you a chance to throw it over beyond your birth-day, which I believe you are convinced is the safest course. For even should you place the utmost reliance in him, and unite yourself in marriage while he is in debt to me, your property will become your husband's by law, and I can sue him and get possession of it, in spite of all right and justice towards you. You would not only place yourself in his power, but in mine also.”

"You are certainly a very remarkable man. At first I thought you anxious that I should get married, so that you could get payment of a debt due you, and now you seem intent on making such arrangements as will quite preclude you. I cannot but believe your intentions are all meant for my benefit, and I will submit to your guidance. Do not let me ever learn that I have misplaced my confidence—given perhaps too readily to one I know but little of. You will not deceive me?"

"Never! Mind, I do not oppose your marriage; I only ask a postponement. I shall trust hopefully that you will reform the habits of Nat, and live a long, happy life with him. I wish the full power of female influence could be brought to bear upon all of us, till the foolish, wicked fashion of drinking intoxicating liquors was banished from the world. It is a hateful sin, and the parent of almost every other one, and if it is ever driven from society, it will be so by an army of just such soldiers as yourself."

"Do you think so? Do you think that we could unite—form associations that would be successful, if we should declare our object to be the total prohibition of liquor in society? Only think what a powerful foe you would pit weak women against. I am afraid we should utterly fail."

"No; depend upon it, there is no such word as fail to woman's will. And mark my word—the time will come when drinking will be banished from the houses of all of the most respectable families in the country; and the time will come when to be a distiller, will not be a recommendation for a man to hold such an office as deacon of the church."

"God speed the day ! and if I could believe that my acts would have any influence to produce such a great good, I would commence this very day, and resolve that, for one, I would never touch, taste, or give to another, a single drop of the soul and body destroying poison."

"Of what is the ocean made up ? Single drops of water. Does the snow-drift fall at once six feet deep ? No, it is the aggregation of little particles. Look at yonder tree. The buds are swelling, and in a few days there will be a wilderness of green leaves. What if one should say, ' I will not start first ; I will not first stand out alone before the world, to proclaim the beauty of nature springing forth to honor nature's God, for fear that my fellows will not follow. What if the nipping frost of the world should rudely assault me for my presumption for coming alone to brave its power. No, I will not show my face till some other bud has first shown his.' And thus every leaf would remain close within the shelter of the unopened bud, and all the woods would stand gloomy and dark when each tree should be singing songs of praise to its Maker, in the glory of such an early sweet spring as this. To accomplish any good, each individual must act independently, and never fear to take the lead in any measure that conscience dictates is right."

"Why, doctor, you almost persuade me to adopt your own views. Are you teetotally opposed in practice, as well as theory, to the use of liquor ?"

"I have not been, but I am ready to join you, and will pledge myself as firm as this rock, never to drink another drop of anything that can intoxicate, while I live."

"Here is my hand ; I will abide that pledge, and use my influence to prevent others."

"You have already used that influence in the case of poor Mike. Think what a blessing that will be to him. Think what a blessing the same influence may be to others. Think what a happiness it will be to Mike, to hear that his two best friends—his only true friends—here upon this, to him, almost holy ground, have pledged themselves to an act, that may some day be the means of saving a thousand such boys from destruction."

"Yes, if like the leaves, in the genial sunshine of spring, a thousand others shall follow our example, and burst into existence."

"They will, they will. And now good-bye, for I have much to do before night, and then to meet Mike, to speed him on the journey I have promised him."

"Good bye, and God bless you, for all that you may do for that poor boy ; for something tells me that I shall yet reap a rich reward for the little I have done for him. I am not superstitious, yet it does seem as though Providence has lent a special protection to that boy, for one of its own wise, though hidden purposes."

"Do you not see the good fruit which your kindness to him has already produced—not to him alone, but to yourself—to me?"

"I cannot say that I do. Will you explain?"

"It is owing to the good lessons you have given him, that I took an interest in his destitute condition, and have promised to aid him in getting out of the charmed circle of

evil associates. It is owing to that, that I have had this interview with you, which I trust will result in no little benefit to your interest. Another of the fruits of this interview, is the pledge which we have mutually made to each other, to abstain hereafter from the use of everything that can intoxicate. What if we can induce a hundred others to unite with us in this holy crusade against one of the most debasing sins of the age? Then will the little tree planted here by the side of this rock to-day, bear fruit an hundred fold. You planted the first seed with your first lesson to that poor ragged boy, in the fertile soil of the human heart—you have planted another in mine. Do you believe now in female influence? Depend upon it, it is the most powerful engine for good or evil, ever put in motion upon this footstool of omnipotent power. And I trust in God the day is not far distant, when it shall be felt with such force that no Christian church will admit members to its communion table—or allow men to hold the office held by the owner of yonder soul-consuming pandemonium—and that a man will not be esteemed very respectable, who is engaged in the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquor. Be assured, too, that the time will come, when two D.D.'s, to a church member's name, will not be an enviable affix."

"How two D.D.'s?"

"Deacon and Distiller. Perhaps in most cases three would be more appropriate; deacon, distiller, and drunkard. In fact, in some cases, a fourth would not be inappropriate, as the business, if not the man, is devilish."

"You are severe, doctor."

“It is because I am a doctor, and know that severe cases need severe remedies, and rum-diseased patients must be treated plainly. You know that there is no remedy for the tooth-ache equal to extraction of every root. It is my professional opinion that that must be the final means resorted to for the cure of drunkenness. Every root must be extracted. Here is an illustration. There is one of the worst pests of the farmer in Vermont. Look at that bunch of Canada thistles. True, they are but the dried stalks of last year’s growth, that have stood withering through the cold blasts of our long winter ; yet every one of those stalks has borne a plentiful crop of seed ; each one of which has been borne upon its own wings by the aid of those cold blasts, to some far distant field, to nestle down in some rich spot of earth, where now this warm, sunny day is developing its latent life, and to-morrow it will sprout into new existence, producing a new crop of thorns to wound the hands of the laborer in the next harvest field. The evil is already done—these stalks are dry and harmless—to pull them up and destroy them by fire, will accomplish no good. It would be like wreaking our vengeance upon the drunkard, and burning him for his folly of getting drunk. Each of those stalks has a root, deep down in the earth, which fire cannot reach, and frost will not kill ; and if it is not dug up from its deepest recess, down to the last fibre, it will sprout again into life ; again send its winged seeds abroad upon the breeze ; again produce thorns to wound the flesh, producing festering sores that will gangrene in death, beyond the power of the most learned phy-

sician's skill. The only remedy is to prevent the spread of the evil, by destroying root, branch and seed. Look at yonder column of black smoke, as it curls up into the clear blue sky, and spreads out over that pleasant valley, which God made for the peaceful habitation of man. Do you know where that smoke comes from?"

"Yes, too well. It comes from the fire which warmed a serpent into life that stung my father to death."

"It comes from Deacon Brandon's distillery."

"And I about to marry his son—to take the hand of the man who, perhaps, made the sting that took my father's life. Oh! I have never looked upon it in this light before. But it is too late now to look back, for I have given my word, and I will keep it sacred. Besides, I have a holy duty to perform. It will be an opportunity for me to exercise that influence which you give me credit for possessing."

"And which I hope you may use for good. I hope it may be used here and everywhere until such columns of smoke shall cease to mock heaven by ascending up towards God, from such manufactories of the venom of loathsome worms and poison serpents. Black as the smoke of those burning pine-knots is, it would not soil the snowy whiteness of your dress, or dim the lily and rose tints of your skin, in half so great a degree as the fluid now pouring through the worm of that still, if taken into your own system. Look at that cloud of smoke as it drifts down the valley, hanging like a pall over the people, or spreading out like a great sheet of crape, in mourning for the deaths of the victims which that fire has consumed."

"What shall we do to drive away that pall, and let the sun shine clear and unobscured upon the happy homes that would then fill the land?"

"Put out the fire. Until that is done, you might as well expect the thistle would not grow again from the root, as to expect that the smoke would cease to rise, or that drunkenness could be prevented. Quench the distiller's fire—stop the cause, and the effect will cease."

"How can that be done?"

"Gather the tears of drunkards' orphans and widows; mix them with the blood spilt in drunken brawls, or shed, indirectly by the distiller's own hand; add to this the carbonic acid, generated or used in the distiller's trade, and pour the compound upon his fire, and it will be quenched for ever."

"And shall we not also pour upon his heart the groans and prayers of his poor victims?"

"No. You might just as well pour oil upon fire, or water in the sea. You might as well offer prayers to this rock, for that smoke to cease to rise. The one would be quenched, and the other feel, just as soon as the heart of a man who deliberately engages in the business of converting grain, which God made to feed his creatures, into a substance which the manufacturer knows will produce death. You may ask the wind to cease blowing, and just as well expect to be heard. The distiller has no ear, no heart. You may talk to the drunkard and expect to be answered, in reason, if the distiller has not annihilated it. You may touch his heart, and arouse his feelings, but the man who makes, or

sells him the liquor, has no heart, no soul, no reason, no mercy ! You may touch his pocket, you cannot reach his sense of justice !”

“What then can we do ?”

“We can talk to all who will listen, until we make other’s think, and then they will begin to act. We must learn to call things by their right names, and not hesitate any more to say that a man is murdered, who is killed by rum, than if he was struck down by the assassin’s knife.”

“Would you call distillers and rumsellers murderers ?”

“I would. If a man gives arsenic to another, and he dies, however lingeringly, the world calls it murder.”

“But in case of selling liquor, the maker or seller has no design of taking the life of the imbibor.”

“True, he makes and sells rum for the profit to himself, knowing it will be drank by somebody, producing disease and ultimate death, without a care who it kills.”

“But he does it without malice.”

“So does the highwayman blow out the brains of his victim without one drop of malice in his heart. He simply desires his money, and he commits murder to obtain it. What else does the man that sells liquor to his neighbor, knowing that his days will by its use be shortened ; he knows that he is robbing him of his money and life just as surely as the highwayman ; the only difference being that custom and law sanction one, while the other is called a felony.”

“I have never thought of the subject in this light before.”

“There are many thousands just as thoughtless as you

are. I have often thought of it, and often determined that I would practise as I thought, but I never have before fully made up my mind to begin the work. I just needed the sympathetic influence of another mind to put mine into activity. In yours I have found that magnetic power, and I thank heaven for the cause which brought us in contact."

"What do you say is the cause?"

"Pure and undefiled religion. You visited the fatherless in his affliction, and like an angel of benevolence, charity, mercy, magnetised the latent heart into life, and that awoke my own conscience to the realization of the truth that I have not in all things followed the golden rule. If I have not as rudely as some of my fellow men, trampled some tender human shoot in the dust, I have not done all my duty to God and man in lifting up those already down. You have not only taught a lesson to the boy Mike, but one to me which I intend to profit by hereafter."

"And you in return have taught me several. I have gained new ideas, new motives to action, new impulses to my nature, in these few minutes of our interview."

"It is thus through all nature. This penknife is as powerless to lift a needle as this fine twig. Touch it with the lode-stone, and it becomes an active magnet, and the needle would spring from your hands to mine, clinging to the knife by some unseen, mysterious power, so strong that they could only be separated by force. Just so with the human mind. Let it once be touched for good or evil, by the magnetic power of another, and see how the two cling together and work in unison."

"What a strange doctrine !"

"Yet you must acknowledge that it is true."

"It does seem so. But I never heard it taught before."

"No wonder. None of our schools ever teach the doctrine of—know thyself. The physiology of the human system, is to youth of both sexes a forbidden theme, and boys and girls grow to maturity and often become parents while they are as ignorant of their own natural functions, as yonder beast. But enough of this. I am getting upon a subject that would lead me into a dissertation, tiresome to an untrained mind."

"Not to mine. It is just becoming intensely interesting."

"Because you have a mind ready to study nature, and profit by its teachings."

"I think I would if I had such a teacher."

"Well, at a future time ; I must go now. Once more, good bye. I will see you again soon. Remember what I have advised you about business."

"I will. Good bye. Tell Mike if he loves me, to live to deserve my continued affection."

"Farewell."

What an honest warm pressure of the hand. Its magnetic influence went to her heart and tingled in its inmost recesses, and then away through the arteries in a moment, to the extremity of every limb. He looked in her eyes as he held her hand a moment, and she felt the fascinating power, and could not have resisted a kiss if he had offered it. Why should she ? It would have been a kiss such as a brother would have given a dearly loved sister. Such a one as any human

being may give another. A seal of friendship. Affections' honest offering upon a holy altar. Such a one as a dying child of sorrow might give a noble benefactor who had been more than a father or a brother—a friend in the hour of affliction. Than a kiss, what could a dying child give that would be longer remembered? What can one friend give another, more pure, more holy or more acceptable than such a token? Alas that it should, Judas like, ever be polluted.

CHAPTER IV.

Day Dreams obscured by Dark Clouds—The First Doubts of Love—Reasonable Conclusions—The Truthfulness of Woman's Love—Constraints of Fashion—The Parson and his Mug of Flip—A New Vision of the Mind to Alida—Hope saves from Despair—A Foreboding Shadow—The Word of Mike against Deacon Brandon—A Miserable Vagabond—Who made him so?—Alida and her Mother talk about Education—The First "Woman's Rights Convention."

FOR hours after Dr. Field left her, Alida sat reading or working almost automatically. Her mind was full of thoughts of the past and visions of the future. In spite of all her efforts to get a clear view of that much-sought after Utopian land, every scene was hazy, and some of them obscured by thick, black clouds. For the first time, perhaps, in her life, misgivings had come over her mind about Nat Brandon. She could not think that Mike had deceived her intentionally, but he must be mistaken. Perhaps the whole with him was a dream. That was the most reasonable conclusion. She could not, would not doubt that Nat Brandon loved her—had loved her from early school-boy days—always loved her—must love her still. She would not doubt it. She did not reason that "first young love" seldom lives through the teens. Premature in its development, it is equally so in its decay. Though she

did not doubt his love, she had misgivings of his character and habits, that tormented her with thoughts which she could not drive out of her mind.

Of these she had spoken to him. At first, he was very indignant at the idea, that she should begin to rule him before he was married, and broke off his intercourse, but finally came back very humble, and promised reform, and for a while everybody cried, "What a change in Nat Brandon!" Some, as they were called, illiberal persons, said, "It was all owing to the wealth of her grandmother that he came back ; he wants her money more than he does her."

Alida, by nature was confiding, affectionate and forgiving ; and she loved Nat Brandon with all the truthfulness of pure affection. She knew that he drank, and as she said to her mother, so do all young men ; and pertinently asked her if she was going to wait for that miracle—a man that did not use intoxicating liquor. She had never heard any one talk like Dr. Field, and did not feel as though she had any right, or that it was her duty to set up a crusade against a habit in which everybody indulged. Even her own mother, widowed by the demon of Deacon Brandon's distillery, had not banished the poison from her home. Although she used little or none herself, she felt constrained by the tyrant fashion, whenever she was visited by the neighbors, to treat them with whisky, sweetened, to disguise its fire, with maple sugar. Whenever Parson White called, the first inquiry after the compliments of the day, was :

"Well, Sister Blythe, is the beer-barrel all right?"

If answered in the affirmative, the flip-iron was taken down from its place and thrust into the hottest part of the fire, where the parson watched it as it took on its ruddy color, rubbing his hands in an ecstasy of delight, as a school-boy just returned with a consuming appetite, would watch the movement of his mother, as she drew from the oven the smoking loaf of rye and Indian bread, and the pot of baked beans, those two glorious products of a New England farm-house.

By and by when it was just right, he would take it out and give it a couple of raps upon the hearth, and that was a signal for the widow, to bring the mug of beer already mixed with whisky and sugar, and set it upon the hearth between the parson's feet, and then he would plunge in the heated iron, and stir the mixture into a sort of creamy consistency, and then putting it to his lips, let it gently flow down his throat, as though anxious to prolong the feast.

"Ah!" he would say, as he wiped the froth from his lips, "that is nectar, such as the heathen gods never dreamed of."

Under such influences, it would have been the eighth wonder of the world, if a young girl had rejected her lover, because he indulged in the use of alcohol as a beverage. But now she had new views. A new light had broken in upon her vision, and if she had been free to choose, she would have said, "I will die a maid sooner than wed a drunkard." But she was not free. She had given her word, and even promised that it should be consummated this very night. Still the vision looked dark, and at times as her mind became absorbed in its day dream, she seemed to stand upon the

very brink of a fearful precipice, from which she recoiled with a convulsive shudder.

Finally, that most blessed of all the angels, Hope, came to her relief and she said ; “ Yes, it shall be so. I will marry him, and then work his reform. If love, truth, kindness, and a forgiving spirit can win him back, they shall. Oh, they will, I am sure they will. There can be no danger—no doubt. But I hope he will propose to put it off to-day, and then I will follow Dr. Field’s suggestion.

But there was doubt ; a fear that she had deceived herself in the character of the man she was about to wed ; and in spite of all her resolution to the contrary, that doubt continued to intrude itself into her mind, and embitter every thought. The sun was shining sweetly, gloriously, as it does shine in early spring in the latitude of 45° in America. She sat trying to read and work at the same time, with her mind fixed upon neither. All at once she started in sudden alarm, for a thick shadow fell upon her work and book ; something was between her and the sun. She knew there were no clouds, and as she was seated upon the south side of the rock, and to the westward of the vine-entangled tree that formed her bower, it could not be the shadow of rock or tree, for now the sun was sinking fast away behind that chain of hills known as the Green Mountains. What could it be ? She was almost afraid to look up. There was a sort of superstitious foreboding that it was a shadow of evil coming over her life. She foreboded truthfully— it was such a shadow. She looked in the direction of the sun, and there she saw the cause of the obscuring cloud. The smoke

of the old distillery, which had been rolling lazily down the valley all day, without dissipating itself, or becoming mixed up with the atmosphere, so as to lose its identity, had been suddenly driven up again by a change in the wind, and rendered into a murky cloud before the sun, where it hung, as though suspended in the air, directly over the place of its origin.

"Oh! that it would settle down, and blot it out forever," was her involuntary exclamation. "But what, if it should blot out those it might enshroud in its folds of darkness? Lost, lost, lost!"

"Why, Alida, I really began to think you were lost. Why, my girl, do you know that you have been here all day, and have had no dinner? I wish you would not spend so much time alone. I am afraid you are getting melancholy."

It was her mother.

"Oh! no, mother. And besides, I have not been alone all the time. Don't you know I have had company?"

"Yes, I know Dr. Field called to see you, and I told him you were up here, and I began to think he had smuggled you away, he is such a desperate smuggler. I would not have let him come up alone, but I was so busy I could not come, and I had no one to send, and it was so near noon, I was afraid to blow the horn, for fear the boys in the sugar-camp would think it was for dinner, and come home before it was ready. And besides, the doctor would not let me take a bit of trouble about it, and as soon as I told him where you were, he jumped over the fence, like one

of the boys, and went off on a run, just about as lively as any of them. I do wonder if he is as bad a man as they say he is?"

"They! Who?"

"Why all the folks. Deacon Brandon in particular. He says he is a terrible smuggler, and he is afraid that is not all; but that he feeds the enemies of our country at the same time that he buys their goods."

"That is with beef cattle, I suppose, stolen out of Deacon Brandon's pasture."

"Yes, but the deacon says he guesses the stealing was all a sham, and that the doctor got his pay,"

"I have no doubt of it, mother. And I have just as little doubt that Deacon Brandon shared half the profits, as he was in full partnership with the doctor in the purchase of the cattle."

"Why Alida, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say, mother, nothing else."

"I don't believe it, not a word of it."

"Nevertheless, it is the truth."

"Who told you so?"

"Some one upon this very spot this day, who has never lied to me."

"Why you never saw him to speak with him before. He told me so."

"I do not mean Dr. Field."

"Why, who else has been here? Have you had other company?"

"Yes ma'am. But you need not be alarmed; it was only Mike."

"Mike! And would you take that boy's word against our good deacon?"

"I would."

"Well I am ashamed of you then. A boy that all the neighborhood calls a miserable vagabond."

"Who made him so?"

"Well, I don't know. I suppose he made himself so."

"You are pretty near right, mother. Left a poor, friendless orphan, with none to care for him, and surrounded by all the evil influences of a new settlement like this, and shut out from all the good ones, I do not think it very wonderful that he grew up a drunken vagabond. Mother, do you see that cloud of smoke? You know where it comes from. It was there that poor Mike became a vagabond and a drunkard, in the distillery of the good deacon, who, although you know he has been engaged in feeding his own flesh and blood, and all his neighbors, for years, with his distillations of death, you cannot believe him guilty of feeding the enemies of the country with beef, which he sold them at a monstrous profit; but it is true; and it is the least sin of the two."

"Why, Alida, I never heard you talk so earnestly before. What has come over you?"

"That black cloud of smoke, coming up like the smoke of another place, only one degree worse than the one where it comes from—I shall never see it rise after this without thinking how many have been lost, lost, lost, by the fire that produces that murkey cloud, as long as I remember what I have heard, and said, and resolved to do this day."

"Well, I do believe that you have seen or heard something

that has crazed your brain. What have you been reading? Let me see. 'Facts in Physiology!' Well, I am sure that I don't know what that ology is. Let me see. 'The proper study of mankind is man.' Oh! Alida, I am afraid you have been reading some bad book—something about the men that you ought not to know. It is plenty time for a girl to learn about such things after she is married. I am sure I don't think it is at all proper for a young girl to study about man; she will know all that soon enough."

"I do not think so, mother. I do not believe that human beings, rational beings, men and women, can know too much about their own nature. This little treatise is not, as you seem to suppose, a work designed to corrupt the mind, but to teach of the nature, structure, and functions of the various organs of human beings. It teaches what is healthy food for the child; how it should be clothed and treated in infancy, and how in youth; and what changes take place at the age of puberty; and how parents should guard their children at this age against the danger of excesses; and a great many things that I think they should be told, though I am not complaining that you never told me."

"How should I, when I was never told by my mother?"

"So I suppose, for you have always been anxious that I should learn all the things that you were ever taught in school."

"And I guess that is about enough for any girl to know. If there had been anything else, I am sure that my father or mother would have found it out, and if they had not,

some of the school-committee-men would. I should like to know where they ever had better schools than we used to have in Old Connecticut, when I was a girl."

"What books did you use, mother?"

"We had the New England Primer ; Webster's Spelling-Book ; the American Preceptor ; Murray's Grammar, Abridged ; Daboll's Arithmetic, and the New Testament ; and I should like to know if them don't contain about all that is ever necessary for anybody to know, except reading the Old Testament at home, and going to hear a good sermon every Sunday."

"It does seem that the majority of mankind think that is sufficient, yet I cannot help thinking that there are some other sciences which might be taught to good advantage, even in our common schools, and this is one of them—'Facts in Physiology.'"

"Well, now, do tell me what is physiology."

"It is the science which teaches us all the the functions of all the organs—all the parts of animals and plants."

"What, all?"

"Yes, mother, all, from the germination of the seed, to the ripening of the fruit."

"Well, I suppose that is well enough about fruit, but I thought this was about mankind ; and I don't want any child of mine to learn all these secrets about themselves. I don't think there is any good in it, unless you were going to be a doctor, and I guess this world never will come to that folly, having female doctors."

"No, not if the study of everything that would instruct

us in our own natures is to be kept from us. But I trust, mother, that the day will come when a female physician, or a female preacher of the Gospel, will not be among the things unknown—as all the sciences in the world are now—to the majority of our sex. I hope the time will come when woman will think she has some rights in the world, and not be afraid to speak what she thinks.”

“Well, well, I should think that you have been studying things that have put you out of your right mind. Why, I never heard anybody go on so. If this Dr. Field has been putting such notions into your head, I hope he will never come here again. Female doctors, indeed. Who ever heard of such a thing?”

“Supposing that we never have, that is no argument against the possibility of our hearing of such a wonderful thing in some future time. Christ was not heard of until he came on earth, and the Christian religion is not very ancient. As for what Dr. Field said, I assure you he said nothing upon this subject; but upon another; what he said—what he advised me to do—I am sure you would approve, for it concerned you as well as me.”

Alida then related to her mother the advice which he had given in regard to assigning her legacy to her mother, though she did not tell her that she had agreed to a proposition for a clandestine marriage. Mrs. Blythe could not but approve of the proposition, though she still determined not to give her consent to their union, and to prevent it if possible; and she had no doubt of her ability to do so. She did not know that Alida had made up her mind upon

the subject, and although it would not now be the marriage of love that it would have been some months ago, she could not forget how she had loved Nat Brandon, and in fact, loved him still, and as soon as she had produced the reform so confidently anticipated, she would again love him with all the ardent affection of youth's first, fond, happy, sweet, gushing love of the heart. Poor girl, she had not yet sufficiently studied mankind to know that all of his love for her should be spelt with only the first letter of love, and three other letters that form a word of very different import from that which blesses all who feel its influence, while the other only debases its victims.

Love is an attribute of angels. Lust is the base passion of corrupt nature; one of the devil's strong aids; for it often makes men do devilish acts of folly and wickedness. Its effect upon Nat Brandon we shall see in the succeeding pages.

While we leave Mrs. Blythe and Alida to return to their home, let us look again into the old still-house.

CHAPTER V.

The old still-house—A mysterious voice—Conspirators of Alida's ruin, alarmed—Disappointed—Marriage postponed—Nat has to go to Montreal, and, what he intends to do—Swears vengeance upon Mike, for the kiss to Alida—Nat and his companions plotting—Dr. Field counter-plotting—The madness of jealousy, and meanness of revenge—The story just beginning to be interesting—Money is the root of evil—Dr. Field goes to meet Mike, the sequel of which will not be told in this chapter.

NAT's companions of the previous evening, had met by appointment, to hear the report of Nat in answer to his letter, and if favorable, to make arrangements for consummating the iniquitous scheme they had concocted. They began to get impatient that Nat had not yet returned, and some of them prophesied a dead failure of the plan. If a stranger had been where he could have overheard this conversation, he would have heard that all of them had been suitors of Alida, and had each in his turn been rejected, and that now, in a mean spirit of revenge for the slight thus put upon them, they were plotting together to accomplish her ruin. How it is possible for so mean a spirit ever to find habitation in a human breast, can only be accounted for upon the hypothesis that the long use of ardent spirits tends to burn up all the fine feelings of humanity, and that the doctrine of Pythagoras has already taken effect—that the soul of

man has, even before death, left the body to the possession of that of one of the meanest reptiles on earth. Certainly no *man* ever entertained such a spirit of revenge. No *man* ever hated a woman for rejecting his proposals, though honestly made, for a matrimonial alliance. He would respect her for her independence and candor.

"I tell you what it is, boys," said John Longwood, "I will bet you a treat all round, at May muster, that Nat caves in. He will get alongside of her, and instead of trusting to the letter, will go talking over matters, and then she will come the soft over him, till he won't stick to the bargain."

"I don't think so. He must have the money. He is amazingly hard up. And besides, what does he care; he would marry a dozen girls, if he could get a chance. If he wouldn't, I would."

"No doubt of it, Scale, you did try hard enough to bring Alida to the scratch, but you could not make that horse run, ha, ha."

"Well, if Nat marries her, I don't care. I will have my revenge then out of the stuck-up baggage."

"Now that is just what we are afraid of, that he will marry her. We only want a sham. Blythe, you know, is to act the parson. With his big wig and false whiskers, in a dark room, she never will know the odds. What do you say, Blythe?"

"Why, that I am sorry we have undertaken this business. Alida is a good girl, and she ought not to be deceived. Let us give it up."

"Chicken-hearted fool, you had better turn traitor now. But I tell you what it is, old fellow, if you do blow on us, by the powers of whisky, I will turn States evidence, and bring old Zef Tharp up, and hang every mother's son of you, if I hang myself."

"That's the sort, John, I have made up my mind that Nat shall marry Alida Blythe, this night, or at least pretend to do it, or I will never taste a drop of whisky as long as I live."

"Then you will be a tee-totaller for the rest of your life, I will swear to that."

This startling announcement came through the wall of the building, from the outside. The conspirators had forgotten that "walls have ears," and that in the excitement of the moment, they had been talking in quite too loud a key for their own good. They rushed to the spot to see who owned the voice that had alarmed them to such a degree, with "death to the spy" in their hearts, if not on their tongues, but just as they reached the door, some one jumped into the upper loft from a window next the side hill, a mode of entrance very common for any one coming across the lot from the house. In a moment more they saw it was Nat, and burst into a hearty laugh at the "good joke;" but as they did not condescend to tell him what the good joke was, of course he offered no explanation, and they were so well satisfied that the words had come from him that they never reflected, that from the time they were spoken, it would have been quite impossible for him to have climbed the bank, and got round to the window. If he had

not reached that window at the moment he did, and arrested their attention, they would have discovered as soon as they got round the corner who the spy was, who had been listening for the last ten minutes, to their nefarious plots against that innocent girl. It was a happy circumstance that they were deceived into the illusion that it was all "one of Nat's good jokes."

As soon as Nat could quiet their boisterous laugh at his good joke and their severe fright, he inquired for Dr. Field.

"Has not been here : why, he rode round the fence and said he would be here before I would, and I went back, too, after I started, so that he ought to have been here ten or fifteen minutes. Haven't you seen him, though, boys, now, honor bright?"

No, they had not seen him, but they had heard him, and he had heard them, and coupling the few words heard, with a few more from Mike, and a few more from Alida, and drawing conclusions from all of them, he was convinced that the nefarious plot did exist of leading Alida into a sham marriage, and he determined to thwart the villainous plan. When he heard the declaration of Scale Williams, it was his intention to walk right in and confront the conspirators, and charge them to their teeth with what he knew or surmised ; but the entrance of Nat gave him a moment for reflection, and he jumped on his horse, and stepped quietly around the point of the hill, and rode into the woods without letting any one know that he had been near them ; determined to act in future upon the valuable information that he had thus accidentally gained.

Nat's companions were anxious to know "What success?"—"Did she consent?"—"Will you go to-night?" "Shall we get ready?" &c., &c.

"Yes, I must get ready—I have got to start for Montreal in two hours, and be gone a week or more. Our boat is all adrift."

"Why, what is the matter now? You are not going to back out, are you?"

"Back out, no; if you had seen what I have this morning, you would not think I would back out, I guess. I wish I had let you pour the hot stuff down that imp's throat last night—blast him—I could tear his heart out—and hers too, and would, if I warnt obliged to keep a fair face till I have accomplished my purposes. The smooth-faced hypocrite, to talk to me about drinking, and immorality and all that sort of puritanical stuff. Oh! but let me only once get her in my power, and I will pay her off with interest."

"Halloo! what's broke. Why, the fellow is fairly boiling over."

"Well, I guess you would boil over too, if you had seen what I have."

"Well, what is it? Let us know, and we will help you boil. Come, fire up."

"I know what it is, she has cut him dead—given him the mitten—sacked him—positively refused—ha! ha!"

"Shut up your fly-trap, John Longwood, or I will send your teeth after the last drink, down your dirty throat."

"Come, come, Nat, no quarrelling with John; take a drink

and be friends again, and tell us what it is. If she has refused you, why, then, I will tell you what we will do—we will carry her off, and she shall stand up to the ceremony, or never come back. Peaceably if we can—forcibly if we must—that's my motto. What do you say, Blythe?"

"Oh, I have promised to go with you, you know. Let's drink."

"Let's drink, why you are drunk now. You are a pretty son of a parson."

"Well, who learned me to drink? My old dad. Don't he love it just as well as I do?"

"Ha, ha! you are a chip of the old block. I say, Blythe, do you know what the devil says of your father?"

"No! do you?"

"Yes."

"Well, out with it—what is it?"

"'Oh you are the parson for me.'"

"Good; I will tell the old man of that the next time he preaches to me for taking a little something comfortable of a cold day. But I say, Nat, did my pretty cousin give you the cut, ha?"

"No; you are all in the bushes about the case. She was as willing as I was. I went over there in the morning, and slipped the letter into her hands, as I met her at the door, and simply said good morning, sort of careless, and went in and sat and talked awhile about matters with the old woman, and as I did not ask to see her lady daughter, she began to be quite gracious, and not afraid that I would bite her like a mad

dog. Among other things I told her that I had entirely quit drinking."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good."

"Well, so I had. I warn't drinking then; and then her eyes sparkled, and she said that if I would stick to that one year, she would give her consent for Alida and me to get married. The old fool, to think I was going to do penance for her for a whole year. Just then Alida came in, and said, 'a whole year mother?' 'Yes, and a very short time for one of your age to wait.' And then I said, 'Well, Alida, what do you say to that proposition,' and she held up the letter, as she stood behind her mother's chair, and said 'Well I s'pose I must say yes—there is no other way I see.' To that I answered, 'Very well I shall do what I say, and be on hand at the time.' Then she replied, 'Very well,' I shall be ready, and wait for you.' Warn't that done cute, boys? The old woman never suspected that we were talking anything but what she understood perfectly. So I went off at that, over home, and started up to the sugar camp, and on my way up there, I saw that infernal imp of Satan, Mike, sneaking through the woods, and I followed him, for I can dodge behind trees about as fast as he can. just to see what rascality the sneaking puppy was up to."

"Why, I thought he went with Field—he promised to take him clear out of the country."

"I know it, but Mike has given him the slip. Field was in a great hurry just now, to get off to go down to Decker's, where the doctor expects to meet the dirty vagabond. I

had a good mind to tell him that he need not hurry himself, but I thought I would not, for I want it generally understood that Mike has gone off with Field, because, as true as I live, the first time I meet him, I have an account to settle with him, that he can only pay in one way—I will teach him to put his lips to those that I have kissed, and expect to kiss again. I will tear his soul out, if I am hung for it the next minute.”

“Why, how now, Nat, you are raving?”

“Well, I know I am. I am raving mad, and so would you be, if you had seen what I did.”

“Then, tell us what it is.”

“Didn’t I? I thought I had.”

“No, you only said you saw Mike sneaking through the woods, and followed him.”

“Oh! yes, out to Blythe’s clearing, and there I stopped behind a tree, while he went out to the big rock”——

“Courting rock?”

“Yes; where you got enough of it. Directly I saw Alida coming up through the field, with her work and a book in her hand, and she sat down and took out my letter, and commenced reading it over again. What a chance for me it would have been, but there was that puppy on the other side, and I could not stir. I could have shot him, with a good will, if I had had my rifle with me. I would have shot them both a little after that, if it had been in my power, and no mistake. I never was so mad in my life. She is a jilt and I am a fool. After she had finished the letter, his honor, Mr Granly, walks around as bold as

though he was somebody, and I think they talked for an hour—about me, and about that letter, and about what he had heard last night, I know it was by the motion of things, and do you know, boys, I believe that deceitful minx—and he grated his teeth in a rage of jealousy—that abominable coquette—likes that scamp better than she does any of us—than me, whom she has engaged, time after time, to marry?”

“ Oh, nonsense !”

“ No, it is not nonsense—I will convince you. After talking with her a long time, and I have no doubt making her promise not to go off with me to-night, and just as I was about to rush down upon them, for I could not stand it any longer, he got ready to go, when he actually had the impudence, right before my eyes, to stoop, or kneel down and kiss her.”

“ Kiss her ?”

“ Kiss her.”

“ And you saw it ?”

“ Yes, but that was not all. It was not a kiss upon her cheek ; such as she lets me steal once in a while, but right on the lips. Oh ! you need not gesticulate, for that is not all. She put her arms around his neck, and kissed him. I was fairly blind with rage, and when I looked up again, he was running down toward the big hemlock, and I after him but he had too much the start ; I could not overhaul him.”

“ Did he see you ?”

“ I don't think he did, but he would have felt me if I had come up with him. Boys, you must stand by me, and we

will stop his amorous propensities the first time that he ever sets his foot in the old still-house ; and as for her—why, I have had some twinges of conscience about our plans—I have none now—I am quite cured of all my baby notions. I am outrageous mad to think I have got to go off to-night, just as everything was arranged to humble that proud, deceitful bundle of hypocrisy.”

“Never mind, Nat ; if you are going to Montreal, you will see the pretty little Canuck girl, Marie Louisa.”

“Yes, and if I do, if she is in the same mind she was when I parted with her the last time, I will marry her before I come back, see if I don’t. I am not going to be fooled and jilted any more.”

“But Alida ?”

“I’ll pick the fruit, and leave the tree to blossom afterwards, and cast its fragrance upon the desert air. But I must be off now. Promise me one thing, though—don’t one of you touch that Mike, till I come back—that is my job.”

“Very well, just as you say ; but what takes you off in such a hurry ?”

“Oh, it is some of Dr. Field’s and the old man’s business. But I don’t care ; it will give me another opportunity to see my little Canadian. So good-bye, boys—mind what I say about Mike ; I am to settle with him. He shall kiss red hot coals of fire, ten times, for every once that he has touched lips that I claim. And as for her, I’ll make her rue the day she played the jilt with me. I’ll have her money and be revenged upon her at the same time.”

What a heartless scoundrel. Talking of revenge upon poor Alida, because she had allowed a poor, friendless boy, in his gratitude for her kindness to him, to give her a farewell token of grateful affection, and in the same breath declaring his intention of marrying a girl who he had become fascinated with, in some of his smuggling excursions into Canada. This had undoubtedly been his object for some time, and the different times he had put off his marriage with Alida, had grown out of this new amour ; and his object now, and thoughts were, how he could get the person of one, and money of the other. Alida's money had kept him from marrying the Canadian girl, who was poor, uneducated, and unaccomplished, except in the arts which some girls seem to possess to charm a man into their toils, and hold them fast as the bird within the charmed circle of the serpent's fascination. He had originally felt as much love for Alida as such men are capable of feeling ; but as she was more calculated to win love by her intellectual beauties, than by such propensities as those of Nat—for he was so formed by nature that the animal preponderated over the intellectual sentiment—she had been taken captive by one whose whole strength lay in such qualities as belong in common to all animal natures, before they are refined by education.

Nat Brandon was no more a villain by nature than thousands of others, who stimulate passions, that are naturally almost uncontrollable, until they are quite so, by the use of alcoholic drinks, which, at the same time they sharpen one appetite, have a tendency to blunt all the finer

feelings of nature or education, until one, created in the image of God, sinks to the level of a brute—sinks down until he has but one desire—to gratify a depraved appetite, and brutish passion.

Brought up anywhere but in that old still-house ; that manufactory of death to all who touched its products ; taught from his early boyhood to look upon its effects without a thought of its killing more or less victims every year, though killing them legally, and without prejudice to the killers, what else was to be expected, than that Nat should grow bad at heart, if not naturally so. They well knew that they had shortened the life of old Zep Tharp, but Nat and his associates in crime, applied this salvo to their consciences, “that he would have killed himself in a year or two, at any rate, and he was no use to the world, but a burden to his family, and better out of the way, and so, what is the odds of a year or two of the life of an old drunkard ?” They did not ask, “Who made him so ?” that would have been too much of a home question. Nat, or rather his father, would have had to answer, “true, we make whisky to sell, but we do not oblige anybody to buy it—they can drink it, or let it alone, just as they please—we do not want anybody to be such a fool as Zep Tharp, to drink up everything he has, and then come loafing around, begging, or cutting a little wood, or tending fires for what he wants to drink, because he will get drunk, and then there is no dependence upon him.”

Yet the time was that Zep Tharp could be depended upon ;

and time was when he had a snug, comfortable home and was a sober man—a good husband and kind father. Time was when he first went to work in Deacon Brandon's harvest field, that he only took now and then a dram ; but here it was free as water, and instead of giving his men a lunch, he gave them sweetened whisky, for that was cheaper—it cost him but little, it cost them their lives ; and it so deadened the moral sentiment of his son that he felt no compunctions of conscience when he did an act to a poor helpless girl, that aroused the last spark of manhood in the father, which he and his coadjutors in the first crime, quenched with a death potion.

It was this blunting of humanity that had brought his mind to the conception of his more than murderous idea of leading the gentle Alida into a false marriage, so as to rob her, not only of her money, but of all peace of mind forever.

The full consummation of this nefarious scheme, Dr. Field determined to counteract by his superior skill and generalship, and would have succeeded if he had known the full extent of the villainy in progress. He had no idea in sending Nat to Montreal, that he was sending him where, in his present state of mind, he would put it out of his power to consummate his marriage legally with Alida. Field thought that the money that Nat was fishing for would be secure before his return, and as Alida had made up her mind that it was her duty, as of course it was her inclination, to become his wife, he would take care that the knot should be tied by a real, and not by a counterfeit priest.

With his mind boyant with these feelings Dr. Field left the old still-house and plunged into the forest for a near cut through the trackless woods over to the road to Decker's, where he had agreed to meet Mike.

CHAPTER VI.

Michael bids a long farewell to Brandon Valley, with a heart as light as his travelling baggage—Tokens of remembrance—The welcome of a ragged boy at a roadside inn—Decker's tavern—Mrs. Decker—Her portrait drawn—Michael sent to the kitchen for his supper—The reason he did not eat it—Bringing in oven wood, a most amusing scene—Noise and confusion—A woman frightened, and a woman angry—The story of George Norton, and his blue-eyed wife, and her prayerful influence—Dr. Field arrives, and refuses to drink—Decker astonished—The world turning wrong side out—Another convert to woman's influence—This is a chapter in which the reader can indulge a hearty laugh.

AFTER Michael had parted with Alida, he made his way at once to the place appointed to meet Dr. Field. He merely stopped a moment as he passed, at the widow Tharp's, to say a kind word, and good-bye, and gather a few little articles that he wished to carry with him to his new home. The most valued of these, were some books given him by Alida, in which he had written her name and his on the same page.

His heart was as light as his travelling baggage, as he turned to look his last look, upon a valley to which he owed all that is due to a place that gave him his birth, and nothing more.

It was fortunate for this poor boy, that he had found a friend. It was fortunate, that he had determined to leave

Brandon Valley, for there lay his road to ruin—temptation—and evil associates. Besides, there is no telling what evil the demon of the old still-house, might have prompted those young men in a fit of intoxication, to inflict upon him, if he had come again within reach of their revengeful wickedness. Death, or mutilation, almost as bad, might have been his doom. But he had turned his back upon that place for ever, and as the sun took his western course, he started in the same direction.

It was late in the evening when he reached Decker's, and still later, when Dr. Field arrived, and Mike had been looking for him till he was almost in despair. * He told his story to Decker, and he believed it, and sent him to the kitchen to get some supper, knowing that Dr. Field would pay the bill, and he even urged him to take a dram, and seemed quite surprised, to think a boy of his appearance should refuse ; it was a thing he could not understand, " why such a fellow, after being out all day, hungry and cold, should refuse to warm himself at night, with a dram." It was a new idea, and when Michael told him that he never should drink again as long as he lived, he replied :

" Nonsense, boy, you will come over that. What, live without taking a little, ' O be joyful ;' Oh no, depend upon it, you won't stick to that notion long, I tell you."

" Well, we shall see."

" Yes, yes, we shall see, and you will taste, depend upon it ; you never can stand all alone in such a queer resolution."

" I don't intend to stand alone. I hope to live to have plenty of company. I hope to live to see the day, when

liquor will be neither made, nor sold, nor drank, in Vermont."

"Pooh ! nonsense, boy, go and get your supper. You are a fool, or crazy. Live to see the day that whisky won't be made, or sold, or drank among the Green Mountain Boys. No man will ever live to see that day."

How this dispenser of alcohol was deceived in his calculations. He looked upon the thing as utterly preposterous. He even did not know that he himself could dispense with the daily use of stimulants, so long had he been accustomed to their exhilarating effects.

He did not consider himself a drunkard, and would have felt highly incensed at being classed among that body of his customers; and he would have been quite indignant if charged with having been the cause of reducing them to their present depraved condition, or if told there was any danger of his ever becoming like one of them, and yet he used to brag of it, as something worthy of approbation, that he "had not gone to bed in ten years, without feeling happy." It is not surprising that such a man should have disbelieved in the millennium now actually enjoyed by the citizens of Vermont, and that a large portion of the Green Mountain Boys, and Green Mountain Girls, could no more be persuaded to drink whisky, than he could persuade Mike Granly ;—a boy so lately known as "drunken Mike."

However, as Mike was really hungry, he lost no time in making his way to the kitchen, where he made known his wants to Mrs. Decker, who, like a majority of old time

Yankee housewives, was the presiding genius over this most important department.

It is not unlikely, if her portrait had been painted by a student of heathen mythological science, that he would have represented her with a torch in one hand, and a whip of scorpions in the other. Certainly, if he had long been an inmate of her dominions, he would not have represented her in the character of Aglaïa, Thalia, or Euphrosyne.

If he had exhibited her unadorned, to nature true, her portrait would have been that of a coarse, red-haired woman, with a broad red face, her head wide from ear to ear, her eyes darting fire, her lips thin, her mouth large when opened, but generally closely compressed, her nostrils large and wide open, and ready to snuff up treason, or smell out little delinquencies among her immediate subjects, almost before they were conscious of them themselves; and she would discover any shortcomings of her peaceable and peace-loving husband, sooner than he could discover them by his own intuition. If the rum bottles in the bar ran low, without a corresponding increase among the fourpence-half-penny pieces in the cash drawer, she knew at once that her lord and master of the house, had been getting into one of his "fool-tricks," of treating the loafers that constantly hang around a country bar-room. In fact the poor man was required, under severe penalties, to do all his own drinking at somebody else's expense. If somebody was not there to call for the "drinks all around," which always included the landlord, his business was, whenever he took a "solitaire," to set it down to the account of some of the score of "re-

spectable names," who kept a bar account, the items of which were never very closely scanned, or if they were, at the settlement of accounts, months after, it was utterly impossible to tell whether the charges were correct or not. But "Decker is honest," and that was enough. He always had a smile too, for everybody, and that body supposed "it was all right," though it did sometimes seem a little incomprehensible to those who worked for him, off and on for years, or furnished him with meat and vegetables, and at every such furnishing, or at every meeting and parting with one who labored for him, he was sure to say ; "Well, it is my treat, what will you take ?" but at the settlement they never found a balance in their favor.

It was my task once to post these bar-books—a task it was, too, for it had not been done for twenty-four years. The accounts had been kept upon "bar-blotters"—a true name, for the hard earnings of many a poor man had been blotted out upon their black pages. The custom had been, whenever a customer grew very importunate to have his account settled, to sit down and "pick out the items," and set the amount upon a piece of paper, and thus balance the account, taking good care not to have any witness by, and not to cross off the original entries, as they might be of use, in case of death, some day, to save the widow the trouble of managing too much property.

The general posting of the books, was occasioned first by the importunities of Madam Decker, and secondly, by the pressing of one George Norton for a settlement.

George had been one of the workers, off and on, for the

whole period Decker had kept the house, without a settlement, and without any account upon his own side, trusting all to the bar-book ; but finally, growing dissatisfied with the constant assertion that " We are about square, and it is no use to look over," George was not willing to be put off, and madam insisted that if the accounts were now to be looked over, the whole should be regularly posted, and she had no doubt that if they did find anything due George, they would find enough due from somebody else, to more than make it up.

The result was, in the case of examination of George Norton's account, that in spite of several interlineations of forgotten drinks—forgotten for years and only remembered as the credit side grew too large—a balance of over two hundred dollars was found due him ; and well there might be, for he was credited with upwards of two thousand four hundred days' works, without counting the hundreds of " odd jobs," done for a drink or meal of victuals, all of which were forgotten to be credited, while the drinks, and one to the landlord, had been most regularly charged.

The declaration of the result brought down anathemas upon the head of the poster of the books, and the aggrieved parties would not believe that " figures won't lie," until they had called in another accountant, who spent two days running back the references, and verified every item.

It was wonderful to see with what a bland smile George was now received, and how he was cajoled and coaxed to take " store pay," or " trade for a horse, or even buy a piece of land," half rocks, and the balance alder swamp

and white birches, and give his note for the balance. George was inexorable—he had made up his mind to have the money and go to “New Connecticut,” then the El Dorado of western emigrants.

“The obstinate fool !” said Decker.

“The simple tool and dupe of that blue-eyed wife of his !” said Mrs. Decker.

“The shrewd clever fellow, he shows that he has got a little good common sense,” said a few of the neighbors. The truth is, that George had been married about two years to that blue-eyed wife, so much depreciated by Mrs. Decker, because she was as mild as a May morning, and had had such an influence over George, that he seldom spent a day away from his work, or an evening away from home, and had scarcely touched a drop of rum for a year, and had fully determined, that he would leave all his old associates and temptations, and go West, and never drink another drop as long as he lived.

When he announced this resolution to his wife, how she did fling her arms around his neck, and kiss him and call him her blessed George.

Little did she think that it was herself, and her mild sweet influence that had won him back to a life of blessed happiness.

“Oh, then we shall be so happy, in our log cabin, a piece of land all our own, and our little boy,”—and she ran to the cradle and picked up the baby, and laid him in George’s arms, and said, “God bless you, my dear husband, for that word ! look upon that blessed child, and strengthen

that resolution as you hope for blessings upon him, and upon yourself and me, and you will always be able to keep it, and then we will train him up with the same principles, and Oh, what a blessing he will be to us! Let us thank God, George;" and she knelt down by his side, and raised her eyes and hands in the attitude of prayer. The influence was stronger than he could resist, and although he had never knelt before, he knelt now, and poured forth his soul in heartfelt thankfulness to God, for the treasure that he held in his arms, and for the greater treasure at his side.

From that day George Norton was a new man. It only remained for him to settle with Decker, and if he could get half that was justly due him, he could "pull up stakes and be off." It was for this that he would make no compromises, or go into any trades, but insisted upon the money.

Finally Decker offered him a pair of oxen, some of the kind that abound in New England, noble, red, strong, docile animals, and a covered wagon, and fifty dollars in money. It was a great price for the property, but George's wife advised him to take it, and they would pack themselves and household goods into the wagon and start at once. It was a happy day for them when they did start, notwithstanding Mrs. Decker said they were going to the devil. The difference was, that they were going to a rich country, and George became one of the wealthiest, and most respected farmers in Ohio, and the little boy whom he held in his arms, while he performed the first act of family worship of his life, is now one of the most respected members of Congress from a State that was beyond the "Far West,"

when his father settled, as he supposed, upon that very identical spot, in Ohio.

Dear me what a digression we have made, leaving poor Mike hungry, and seeking his supper in Mrs. Decker's kitchen.

It is no matter, however, for Mike waited longer to satisfy his appetite, than I have taken to tell the story of George Norton, and the blessed influence of his sweet-tempered wife, upon his future destinies.

When Mike entered the precincts of this modern virago, he found her appearance, as I have described, with a few additions. Her awful, ugly red hair, was ornamented with a cap of the "best bib and tucker" order, trimmed with red and blue ribbons. She wore a large tow-cloth apron over her best calico gown, which she had put on for company ; her sleeves were shoved up, showing a brawny arm ; in her left hand, for she was a Benjaminite, she wielded a large butcher-knife, with which she had just been chopping off the heads of half a dozen fowls, just because "the gal" was so tender-hearted about killing anything, a sort of delicateness that the mistress could not understand ; since "she delighted to cut off the heads of the tarnal critters." The blood had spirted in her face, and on her arms, and over her white apron, and in addition to personal appearances, she was just then laying down the law—kitchen law—to John, a poor, mean, rum soaked hanger-on, about his delinquency in not providing "oven-wood before night, as the bread would be up before he was in the morning, and she wanted to put it in the oven before daylight, and not a stick of oven-wood in the house."

“Such doings I am not going to put up with, now mind that, you poor, miserable, good for nothing rum-sucker.”

So he was. Who made him so? Rum from her husband's bar.

It was in vain that he pleaded “that there had been so much company, and so many horses to take care of, that he had been busy all the time, so that he could not get the oven-wood. He had told Mr. Decker about it, but he said ‘never mind, the horses must be taken care of, for these are folks that pay well. You can get the oven-wood in the morning—never mind to-night.’”

“He said that, did he? Jo Decker said that. Go tell Jo Decker to come here, this instant. I will teach him to interfere with my oven-wood.”

And she brandished the bloody butcher knife, as though she would make oven-wood of the said Jo Decker.

It was just at this juncture, that she turned round, and saw Mike, standing hat in hand, patiently waiting his turn. She looked upon him as a well-fed tiger would look upon a lean dog—as too poor for his purposes.

“Well, what do you want?”

“Some supper, if you please.”

“Supper! I thought so; you look like a hungry hound. Who sent you here at this time of night for your supper, when supper is all over?”

“Mr. Decker, ma'am.”

“I thought so; and did Mr. Decker get the pay for it?”

“No ma'am, but”—

“But, you are going to pay, after you have eaten it.

Now, you young scape-gallows, have you a cent of money in your pockets ?”

“ No, ma’am, but ”—

“ None of your butts, you ragged vagabond. The whole suit upon your back would not pay for your supper. Get out of the kitchen, or you will go out without your ears.”

“ But you will be paid for my supper.”

“ Who will pay for it, I should like to know ?”

“ Dr. Field.”

“ Is Dr. Field here to say so ?”

“ No ma’am, but I expect him. He sent me here.”

“ To eat and drink on his account.”

“ No ma’am not to drink ; I do not drink.”

“ Don’t drink. Now do you expect me to believe that ? Such a looking boy as you are, preaching temperance to me ! I don’t believe one word you say. Dr. Field is not such a fool as to throw away his money upon the likes of you. You are a young scamp, and have come here with a lie in your mouth to try and stuff it down my throat, to fill your own. Not a mouthful do you ever eat in my house.”

“ I do not lie, if I am ragged, and I hope to live to see the day when I shall wear better clothes ; and I hope if I ever have food for myself, I never shall turn a poor hungry boy away without giving him something to eat.”

Mrs. Decker’s eyes flashed fire. She sprung at him knife in hand, looking as though she would execute the threat upon his ears. As she approached him, Mike folded his arms, and stood as calm, as though she was as mild as she was furious. For the first time in her life she was held at bay

by a look. She was fairly cowed in her own den. She stopped and looked at him a moment, and then said :

“ Well, I never saw so much cool impudence in my life ; who are you—what is your name ? ”

“ My name is Michael Granly, and that is all I know of who I am. I am now a poor orphan boy, but if I live I will be a man, and not obliged to beg for a meal of victuals, or be accused of lying when I tell how it will be paid for.”

With that he turned to leave the room, where he felt that he had been treated just as the majority of the world are apt to treat those in the same position. His heart swelled not with revenge, but with the feeling that, although almost all he came in contact with were unfeeling, and inclined to trample upon the worm in their path, yet the world held some noble souls who could look beyond the mere outside show of dress.

“ What a contrast,” he thought, as he compared Mrs. Decker with the gentle Alida.”

It was a contrast, to be sure, that eyes less sharp than Mike's could see at half a glance.

Mrs. Decker was evidently so struck with the independence of the boy and his proud bearing, so contrary to anything she had ever witnessed before in one of his appearance, that she partially relented. She expected that, beggar like, he would fawn and cringe, as the scorpion lash was applied, and still beg for something to eat ; and after doing a dog's duty at picking old bones and dry crusts, show his gratitude, though only from the teeth outward, for so great a favor.

As Mike turned to go, and had his hand upon the door

of the passage that led to the bar-room, she told him to stop, and bade the girl set some cold victuals on the table, and said that he should have something to eat, notwithstanding he was so saucy.

"You may keep your old bones," looking at the dish the girl brought out of the closet, "for some more hungry dog ; I will not gratify you by picking them if I should starve. I have not been saucy, and I will not be a cringing beggar. Good night, madam."

The door closed behind him, and Betty almost dropped the platter, so astonished was she that such a boy should dare to brave such a woman in her own house ; in the very penetralia of an apartment where her husband dared not dispute her sway. But when she looked at her mistress, she was completely dumfounded. She placed the platter upon the table, and stood with eyes and mouth wide enough open to swallow one of the shin bones of beef before her. Mrs. Decker was struck with amazement ; the butcher knife had fallen from her hand upon the table ; the color came and went upon her face ; her bosom heaved like a panting ox ; her eyes were fixed upon the door as intent as Hamlet's upon the ghost of his father ; her lips quivered and turned pale with rage ; she seemed for a minute to be in a sort of trance ; and if a daguerreotype of her and Betty could have been taken at that moment, it would have made a curious and interesting picture. How long the terrible silence—terrible because so very unusual—would have continued, is uncertain, but just then there was a crash behind her as though the side of the house had been suddenly driven in, that fairly

lifted both her and Betty from their feet and brought them to their senses as suddenly as a shower-bath does a woman in hysterics.

Mrs. Decker came to the right-about-face, with an expression in the double sharp key ;

“ What in h——ll is that ? ”

It was John, just coming in with a pile of oven-wood, big enough for a horse load, which he carried in a peculiar way of his own, on his shoulder, by holding a strap over the top. Just as he reached the open door of the kitchen, two or three big cats that had walked into mischief in the closet, left open by Betty, when she went for the platter of bones, made a dive for the door, entangling John's over-loaded legs, and pitching him headlong under the long kitchen table, while his pile of wood, unloaded with a strong projectile force, went endwise over the table among the dishes, and out of the window, or into the old clock-case, knocking over the clothes-horse and chairs, and rattling against the pine board partition, as though forty horses had plied their heels at once, to beat a grand tattoo. It was no wonder that madam, in the excitement of the moment exclaimed, “ What in h——ll is that ? Earthquakes and furies ! Is the house coming down upon my head ? Decker ! ”

She had no need to call so loud for that personage, for the noise had reached the bar-room in redoubled echoes, and the crowd came pouring into the kitchen, with about the same kind of prompting that gathers a crowd around two street loafers, trying to blacken each other's worthless eyes.

Curiosity moves the world, just as it did the bar-room loungers, "to see what the muss was."

"Who did it?" said Decker, as he looked upon the wreck around him, "Who did it?"

"The cats," said a faint voice, from some invisible mouth under the table.

The idea was so ridiculous, that Decker burst into a roar of laughter, in which he was joined by a strong chorus.

"Cats have been getting oven-wood for the old woman, and have dropt it on the table, ha, ha, ha! I guess they were frightened at Betty's platter, and threw down their load in a hurry, for fear they might have to pick the bones. ha, ha, ha!"

This was a bold speech, but it was not that which offended the goddess of the kitchen; it was another word. He had called her "the *old* woman."

What woman with a red ribbon in her cap, would stand that? Not Mehetabel Decker.

She had looked under the table where "the cats" had come from, and comprehended the whole thing in a moment, for she had come well-nigh making the same kind of an entry into the kitchen that very day, through the same cause; so, instead of venting her spite upon poor John, she was rather inclined to commiserate his misfortune, but as she must let out upon somebody, she did so upon Decker and his bar-room company. She ordered them all out of the kitchen in double quick time, and as they did not move quite fast enough to suit her, she began to apply the sticks

of oven-wood so vigorously that she soon saw the door close behind those who would dare to call her "old woman," or laugh at her trouble in the oven-wood line.

When John crawled out, rubbing his bruised shins, and scratched nose, and told her how it happened, she fairly shouted with merriment at the ludicrous, though unfortunate mishap. Instead of setting her in a boiling rage, as John and Betty both expected, it operated quite the contrary; and they both thought that they had not seen her in such good humor for a month.

After gathering up the scattered shot, and the dead game, and setting things to rights, she sat down and made John tell the whole story over, and even act it out in part that she might laugh again, to think how suddenly he must have come in, and what a scattering of his load, and fright to her and Betty. "I was frightened, that is a fact," said Mrs. Decker.

"And so was I," said Betty, "I thought the whole house was coming down."

"Faith, I expected it would, upon my poor head, as soon as I poked it out from under the table. I will murder them cats to-morrow."

How it does ease one's mind to have some object to wreak our revenge upon.

However, the lady had no idea of having all her cats destroyed to satisfy that feeling in John's mind, but she compromised the matter by allowing him to kill one of them, "if he would be sure to do it good, and not half kill her, and have her coming to life after a week." This of course he

promised, and all was calm, and pleasant, in the kitchen, as the hour after a storm has passed away. It was lucky that things had taken such a turn, for just then a messenger from the bar-room, opened the door carefully, on a crack, and inquired if supper could be had for two hungry travellers. Decker had not ventured to trust himself, where the oven-wood flew about so freely, and had hired a fellow, willing to go upon the forlorn hope, for a drink of "white eye." He took good care, however, to keep his head out of range of any flying billet, but he soon found by the tone of madam's voice, that the storm was over.

"She inquired, "who is there?—come in and tell me what you want. Now, who is it that wants supper?"

"I believe ma'am, they call him Dr. Field; and he says, 'tell Mrs. Decker we are very hungry, and want the best she has in the house, and plenty of it.'"

"Tell him he shall have it, in less than no time. Betty, the tea-kettle. We must have one of the fattest of those pullets, stewed with gravy, and some potatoes roasted—let us have them right in—I know what will suit the doctor. Get one of those best mince pies, wheat crust, top and bottom, and warm it. Give Jim a piece of bread and butter, I know he is hungry, boys always are; we'll charge it in the doctor's bill. There, Jim, go back and tell him that you saw the supper under way. John, go and see if the doctor wants a fire in his room. I do wonder if he did send that boy here. If I had thought so, he should have had his supper in spite of his saucy tongue. Who can the other gentleman be, I wonder?"

That she will find out in due time, and also, whether Mike has told the truth, about being sent there by Dr. Field.

The first thing after the doctor's arrival, was to see that his horse was got into a warm stable, and the sweat rubbed off, and then covered with a blanket, for he had ridden hard, and like all good horse masters, who put their animals to the test of strength, or speed, he never neglected so good a friend. This duty performed, he came in the bar-room, and the first word was :

"I say, Decker, have you seen anything of a boy inquiring after me, or that said I sent him here ? He was rather shabbily dressed, and I don't know that you would notice him, but I told him to tell you I sent him, and for you to give him something to eat."

"So I would, but the commissariat department was in a state of —— what shall I call it ?"

"Oven-wood disappointment ;" suggested a gentleman with a red nose.

"Ha ! ha ! ha ! that's it. The Lord have mercy upon all husbands and hired men, if the oven-wood fails to come up to time. But I think that John was a little ahead of the old gentleman of the scythe and hour-glass, to-night, when he made his grand entrée into the kitchen, ha, ha, ha !"

"You have your fun all to yourself," said the doctor, "but my boy has been here then, and has had no supper. No. Very well. How is the weather now in the kitchen ? Can I get anything to eat ?"

"Oh Lord yes, as soon as your name is announced, there will be a change of wind into the fair weather quarter instanter."

"Then send in word that two hungry travellers want the best supper that she can get in the shortest time."

"Two ! why, is anybody with you ?"

"Didn't you tell me that my boy was here, and that he had not had any supper ?"

"Oh yes, true, I had forgotten him. Where is he ? Oh there he is, fast asleep on that bench. What a happy faculty to be able to lay down and go to sleep, in spite of hunger."

"Very well, give me a light, and my saddle-bags ; I want to go to my room, before supper."

"Well, doctor, take a little something first—what shall it be ?"

"Not a drop, Decker ; I have taken my last drink of whisky."

"Well then, you know I have the best cogniac and old Jamaica, for you know where I got it. What shall it be ?"

"Not one drop of anything that has the name of spiritous liquor shall ever enter my lips again."

"The devil ! Is the world going crazy ? You are the second customer of the sort I have had to-night. That boy"—

"I am glad to hear it. It is through that boy's influence that I have come to my present resolution. Then you could not coax him to drink ?"

"Not a drop, not even cider."

"Nor me either. And I hope that you will shortly have none but just such customers."

"Why, doctor, do you want to ruin me?"

"No, nor do I want you to ruin others. Look a round you, Decker; here are twenty of your neighbors, you are constantly fitting for bad husbands, bad fathers, bad sons to aged widowed mothers, and bad neighbors, and, worst of all, bad to themselves. Decker, yours is an accursed trade, and sooner or later, I hope you will be convinced of it as I have been, and quit it for ever."

"You must think I am a fool, to starve myself, or take the bread out of my own children's mouths."

"What else are you doing to others? I see more than one present here now, who has pawned house and home, clothes, bed and bread, of himself, and wife, and children, at your bar."

"There, there, doctor, take your light and go on, I am tired of hearing such nonsense."

"Nonsense!" said one of those to whom the doctor had alluded. "It is God's holy truth. I know it; I feel it as I never felt it before. I say, doctor, I want to see you in the morning—I am not fit to promise to-night—but if you will come over to my house in the morning, I will promise before my wife and daughter—I have got a pretty daughter, and a good girl she is too, for she often says, 'father do quit drinking,' and to-morrow morning I will promise, and I will keep it too. Will you come, doctor?"

"I will."

"Give me your hand. Good night. Good bye, Decker, I have taken my last drink with you."

"Well, if this world is not turning wrong side out, then I don't know whisky from old Santa Cruz."

"Come, Michael," said the doctor, "wake up," but Mike was not asleep; he had been drinking in every word of the conversation, with most intense feelings of delight. He traced his own conversion to the influence of Alida—blessed female influence—and he felt proud to hear Dr. Field say, that it was owing to the influence of "that boy," that he had come to his present determination; and now he had witnessed the effect upon one as much in need of reformation as ever that poor boy had been himself. He mentally said, "God bless you, sweet angel, for the good you are doing.")

He needed no second call to follow the doctor to his room.

CHAPTER VII.

A short chapter, but an interesting one—Developments of human nature—Metamorphosis of a ragged boy to a young gentleman—Michael in a new suit, suits Mrs. Decker—The supper—The doctor amused with the oven-wood story, and her account of “that ragged vagabond, Mike.”—Mrs. Decker does not recognize him—A lesson worth remembering—The clothes win, where rags can’t come in—Dr. Field and Michael talk of Alida—Michael too excited to sleep—Anticipation of “a scene” to-morrow, with Mrs. Decker.

As soon as the door closed, Michael related the particulars of his interview with Mrs. Decker, much to the amusement of the doctor, who was busy all the time unpacking his well-filled saddle-bags.

“Now, Mike, there is soap and water, and comb and brush ; but first let me clip your locks a little, and then let us see how you will look in this new suit.”

When all that was accomplished, a more complete metamorphosis was scarcely ever witnessed. He was really a fine-looking boy—young gentleman he would be called in these days of precociousness. His toilet was scarcely completed, before John came to announce supper ; and when the doctor, with a handsome, well dressed, well spoken youth, sat down to the table, the landlady was as full of gracious smiles as a coquette with her lover.

After a few compliments, and seeing that her guests’

plates were loaded with everything on the table, and all the possible questions and additions to make "the tea agreeable," she related the mishap of John and his oven-wood with such graphic minuteness, that the doctor almost choked himself with his repeated bursts of laughter. Mike was excessively amused, though he kept his feelings within bounds, and only made use of an occasional word, such as "thank you," "not any more," or some common-place of that sort, until the lady became quite fascinated with him, "he was such a well-bred boy."

"By the bye, doctor, I had another case here, this evening, that almost put me out of patience, which I shall charge to your account."

"To mine? why what have I done, to put you out of temper? I thought you were always in the finest humor of any woman in the world."

"Well so I am, only when I am provoked. And then Decker is so stupid, you know, he can't see beyond his nose to look into the character of anybody, and so he is all the time getting imposed upon. But they can't fool me."

"Why, Mrs. Decker, has anybody been trying to fool you? I should think they would find that a hard job. You are pretty keen to see things."

"Yes, if ever I see a face once, I always know it again."

Mike hung his head, and was excessively busy for a minute or two, wiping his mouth, and then sipping his tea. He thought his time had come. Not yet.

"But you have not told me what was the matter, or how I am concerned in it."

“Well I was going to tell you, but you men are such talkers, you are always interrupting. You see, after we had all done supper, what does Decker do, but send in one of the raggedest vagabonds of a boy—a saucy, impudent pup—to get his supper; and the fellow with as much assurance as though he had been a gentleman, walked in and ordered the best in the house.”

The smiles began to play around the doctor's mouth, and spread over his face so fast, that he had to get into a fit of coughing to hide appearances. The picture she gave of Mike, reassured him in his incognito, and made him feel easy enough to enjoy the joke.

“Well you see, I was busy, but I turned round, and looked my gentleman full in the face, and said very mildly, ‘Well, young man, you wish for some supper, do you?’ ‘Oh yes!’ ‘And who sent you here to get your supper?’ ‘Mr. Decker.’ ‘And did he get the pay for it?’ ‘No ma’am.’ ‘And have you got any money to pay for it?’ ‘No ma’am.’ ‘Well then, how do you expect to get it without pay?’

“And what,” said Doctor Field, “did the young scamp say?”

“Say, why, he said that you would pay for it.”

“Me! Well, that was cool.”

“So I told him, and marched him out of the kitchen, pretty quick. Didn't I serve him right, to come to me with such a lie on his tongue? Do take another cup of tea, doctor, and the young gentleman—you must not be bashful, young man—do take another cup.”

“Nothing more, I thank you;” said Michael, “I had

rather be a little bashful, than impudent, as you say that fellow was, this evening. Do you know what became of him, or who he was, Mrs. Decker?"

"He told me some name, but Lord knows whether it was his own or not. I shouldn't wonder, if he was lounging about the bar-room, now."

"Quite likely, quite likely. I think I saw such a fellow as you describe, asleep on a bench, when I first came in," said the doctor, very truly too. "Was he about the size of this lad?"

"Oh no, not near as large."

"And did not look like him?"

"Look like him? no more than I do. Why, this is a remarkable fine-looking boy, and that was about as ugly a villain, as I ever saw."

How true it is, that man owes more to his tailor for his personal appearance, than nature. A few locks trimmed off; a clean face; a white shirt collar; a good, though plain suit of clothes, that fitted as though they were made for him; had wrought such a change in Mike's appearance, that a woman who had seen him face to face, an hour before, did not know him. How he did wish he could appear before Alida, to see whether she would recognize him, in his metamorphosed appearance. The time may come, he thought, in some far-off day, when I will have an opportunity to put her to that test."

Mike wondered that Mrs. Decker did not know him. Yet it never occurred to him, that if he had met her in an unexpected place, he might have been as much at a loss

to satisfy himself, that she was the same woman, that he had seen an hour before. There, she was all clouds and tornadoes, now all sunshine and gentle breezes. True, she had on the same cap with the red ribbons, but if that had been changed, there would have been little else to remember her by, for her face, and voice, bore no resemblance to that he had seen and heard in the kitchen. The bloody apron, and bloody arms, had disappeared, and from her conversation, a stranger would have thought, that butter would not melt in her mouth. She was a most decidedly amiable woman. What a pity the whole virago family, could not be induced to remain in the same mood that she was now in ; it would add greatly to their own happiness, and to the domestic comfort of many a household.

The doctor now said, " he would retire," for he presumed, that his young friend was sleepy, and as for himself, he had a letter of importance to write, for the boy to take with him, and he must start early, " but we shall want our breakfast first, if you can give it to us, Mrs. Decker."

" Give it to you, doctor ! why you know very well, that you can have it at any hour you wish ; what time do you say ?"

" Six o'clock will do very well."

" Enough said, you shall have it ; what shall it be, doctor ?"

" If you can duplicate the supper, I think you can be assured, by the way we have eaten, that we shall be satisfied."

" I don't understand what you mean by duplicate—you

are always using such hard words, doctor—but if it is to give you a breakfast just like the supper, you shall have it to a T.”

“Very well ; that is it exactly. Good night, and pleasant dreams to you, my worthy hostess.”

“Ah doctor, you never will outgrow your gallantry ; you are a great flatterer. Good night. Will the young gentleman sleep in the little bed in your room ? Very well. Shall I send John to wake you at half-past five ?”

“Never mind that ; I believe my young friend here is a perfect morning lark.”

“I thought perhaps he was so tired that he would sleep in the morning ; I know we always have to wake you.”

“He was very tired and hungry when he first arrived, but you know that no one can remain so long, under your hospitable roof, Mrs. Decker.”

“Oh, doctor ! but I know you.”

“Not half so well as I do you,” said the doctor to Mike, as the door closed behind them. “Here is a lesson, my lad, worthy of your careful remembrance as long as you live.”

“I have studied it well ; and particularly the point embodied in your sarcastic remark, that no one could remain hungry under her hospitable roof. I have no doubt there is just as much of the genuine spirit of hospitality, in the dry shingles of the roof that shelters her, as there is in the heart that beats in her bosom. She has no feeling but a mean mercenary one, that looks upon every customer with an eye of inquiry, as to how much profit she will be

able to make out of him while he remains in the house. I do not yet understand how a woman can possess such a double nature, as that which I saw exhibited towards the poor, ragged, hungry, friendless boy in the kitchen, and the well-dressed protégé of Dr. Field, in the dining-room."

"You will find the same thing all your life, and it is for that reason what you have witnessed to-night will be of advantage to you in future. Bear it always in mind, that vulgar persons will fawn around good clothes, and spurn the wearer if clothed in a ragged suit, unless he has money, and then no matter what he wears, or says, or does ; toadies will applaud."

"I wonder she did not know me again."

"I do not. At first she looked upon you with contempt, and then your calm, respectful demeanor enraged her so, that she did not know whether you were white or black. At supper she saw you enter as the friend of one she always looks at through a wreath of smiles—smiles intended to win his money, for that is her god—and she saw nothing but the color of the silver she was going to get for our accommodation. She never thought of your being the same boy that was in the kitchen. Michael, the world is easily deceived. Mrs. Decker is more so in me, than she is in you. I find it to my interest to keep up the delusion. You see, by her conversation, that she is an ignorant woman, and she is more vain than ignorant, or else she would despise my flattery. What if any one should flatter your best friend, the gentle Alida, in the same way ; she would only feel for them contempt."

"No, sir she would pity them, and feel anxious to instruct them, to cure them of their folly and weakness of character. What should I have been now, if she had despised, instead of pitied me? A poor miserable drunken vagabond."

"You are right. But you must go to bed, and I must write a letter to my brother for you to take with you. In a few hours we shall part, and I may never see you again, but I long to hear of your good conduct, and then I shall be sure of your prosperity and happiness."

"Before I forget it, doctor, I beg you again to go and see Alida, and tell her that you will be a friend to her, and ask her to give you her confidence and promise her your advice. Tell her I begged you as a last favor to do so."

"God bless you, boy, for you evince a grateful heart. I have been to see her. I was standing in your tracks this morning by that rock in two minutes after you left. There is a perfect understanding between us."

Michael was almost choked with emotion. He could not answer, and hastened to hide the tears that forced themselves forward, in the folds of his pillow. How changed were his own prospects of life within a few days. He remembered the lessons of Alida, and poured out his soul in silent thankfulness to God for all the good things falling in his cup, lately so full of gall.

Long after the doctor supposed he was dreaming, he started up with a laugh, and said :

"I have been thinking, doctor, what a scene there will be with our landlady when Decker tells her how she has been fooled. I don't know as she will give us any breakfast."

"Never fear that. Decker will go to bed so fuddled, for he is in trouble to find three persons who refuse to drink rum, that he wont remember a thing that happened this evening, not even the pelting he got with the oven-wood. She never will discover the cheat until we are gone. I intend to leave the old clothes in the room on purpose, and that will raise her curiosity, and then Decker of course will tell all about it, with any amount of illustrations ; for he does love to get a rig upon his wife once in a while. He can keep her down with this incident for a month, better than he could with a dozen quarrels."

Notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, the new life dawning upon Michael's horizon, was too exciting to allow him to close his eyes in sleep readily, but Morpheus with much wooing was won at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

Michael early up—Is surprised expressing his thoughts in verse—A Vermont breakfast—A morning visit—Mary Tharp—Her prayer for her father—A holy scene—The pledge—Gratitude—Mary hugs Michael—Good bye—Good deeds rewarded—Franklin May—The journey over the Green Mountains—A happy family meeting—New friends for the out-cast-boy—A happy marriage in prospect—Emotions at parting—The fruit of woman's holy influence.

To Michael the night was not one of much sleep. His sudden and great change in life occupied his mind with so much intenseness, he slept but little, and was up at the appointed time, and he washed and dressed himself, and smoothed his hair as though he had been accustomed to do so all his life. It is astonishing how soon a well-balanced mind will adopt improvements in language, actions, habits, when brought under proper influences. He was like one we read of, he was now "clothed, and in his right mind." He looked at the doctor's watch, and found that he could give him half an hour more, and this he employed in writing a farewell to Alida. He had lately often attempted to express his feelings in verse, but with so little success that he had never ventured to show any of the beatings of the spirit within him, not even to his only confidant, and perhaps he would not now, but he became so absorbed in his subject that he did not observe that Doctor Field had

waked, and seeing Mike so engaged had risen upon one elbow where he could look directly down upon the paper upon which he was writing. Seeing the composition was in verse, he could not resist the temptation to see from what author he was quoting, not suspecting that it was original. His surprise was not inconsiderable when he read the following lines, which, however crude, evinced the fact that a rude casket may contain a valuable jewel.

The doctor looked over and read :

"Farewell to Alida, and the cedars and pine,
For fond recollection goes back to thy home ;
And thy heart shall be treasured for ever in mine,
While through the world lonely I'm destined to roam.

"The rock on the hill-side where I planted that vine,
And the last parting farewell beneath that dear shade,
Shall as long be remembered as reason is mine,
And for thee my affection shall not languish or fade.

"Farewell, dear Alida"—

and there his pen stopped—it would not go on—and he rested his head upon his hand with his elbow on the table, lost in a waking dream, for

"Fond recollection goes back to thy home."

"Go on," said the doctor, "it is first rate, and does honor to your head and heart."

Poor Michael—he would not have started more suddenly, or felt more guilty, if he had been caught in a crime. He dropped the pen and snatched the paper from the table, as if it contained the evidence of diabolical treason. Go on !

You might as well ask the eagle to go on after the hunter's shot had crippled both wings, or the goat to climb the mountain side after his legs were bound in the thongs of the butcher. That word, Go on ! had thrown him back, down, down, from Olympus's height to a sublunary sphere. The spell was broken ; he could not have finished the line to save his life. It was with great difficulty that the doctor could persuade him to let him see the composition again, and still more difficult to get his consent for him to give it to Alida. He finally consented, upon condition that he should not tell her where it came from. This the doctor readily promised, well knowing that she would make that discovery at the first glance.

Now there was a gentle tap at the door, and the voice of Betty came through the key-hole to say that breakfast was ready. Mrs. Decker had told her what a " nice young man " came with Dr. Field, and she had begged the privilege of calling them to breakfast, being at that very susceptible age when the sight of a nice young man is extremely gratifying.

" I declare," said she to herself, after they had passed her in the hall, " if he don't look as though, he might be twin brother to that boy, that wouldn't pick them old bones, last night, in the kitchen."

Young eyes are sharper than old ones, for Mrs. Decker, although she sat full before him, and talked as fast as a saw-mill, all the time they were eating, never had a suspicion equal to that of Betty.

The substantial character of an old times Vermont break-

fast, may be judged, when I name a few of the principal dishes set before these two travellers. First, there was the large platter containing the fat pullet, done up in brown gravy ; then, there was another dish of ham and eggs ; a piece of cold veal ; roast potatoes, and fried potatoes ; apple-sauce, and pickles ; cold light bread, and hot light biscuit ; mince pie, apple pie, and dough-nuts. Of the latter, Mrs. Decker insisted that "the young gentleman should fill his pockets, as he was going to travel, and she knew that they would taste good before night."

The doctor had provided Mike with a working suit, but had forgotten, or did not think how he was to carry it. This difficulty was however soon got over, for he took a large silk handkerchief from his pocket, and tied the articles in a bundle, which he was to swing on a stick across his shoulder.

Just as they were about to bid a mutual good-bye, Mike reminded him of the promise he made to the bar-room loungee last evening, and then the good-bye was changed to "God bless you, boy, for reminding me of it. I will go right away, for it may be the means of saving a fellow creature from ruin."

"If you please, sir, I should like to go with you."

"Come along, then ; it is right on your way, and you can take your bundle along with you."

They soon reached the door ; it was a poor, old house, but for a drunkard's home, it had an air of neatness about it, very unusual. There were no old hats, nor rags in the windows, though numerous panes of glass were patched with

paper, pasted over the holes. There was a little yard, with a poor old, fence in front, the gate of which swung upon hinges made of old shoe-soles, and it fastened with a button. There was a climbing rose on the front wall, just budding into leaf, that served, when in full foliage, to hide the broken state of the clap-boards. There was but one window in front, but inside of that were three pots of house-plants, that gave the room a most cheerful aspect, and told in language plainer than words, for it was the language of flowers, that although the husband and father might be debased by rum, it had not destroyed the taste and refinement of the wife and daughter.

Dr. Field and Mike passed through the gate and stood upon the stone step of the door, and were just going to give the customary knock, when they were arrested a moment by the recognized voice of the inebriate of the previous evening, who said, "Mary, daughter, I expect a gentleman here this morning to see me and——"

"Oh, not here, father, just at breakfast time. Who is it?"

"Dr. Field, you need not be afraid of him."

"No, not afraid, but I wonder at his coming here. I thought you always went to Decker's to see him, when you had any business with him. I wonder you do not go there."

"Mary, with your assistance, I am never going there again."

"Oh, husband !" said another voice.

"Father, father, are you in earnest? Say that blessed word again."

"In serious, *sober* earnest. I have made up my mind, and that is what Dr. Field is coming here for, to witness my promise to you and your mother. He has quit drinking, and I believe I can. I shall try."

"Oh Samuel Tharp, have I lived to see this day?"

"Tharp—Sam Tharp," whispered Mike?"

"Hush," said the doctor—"listen."

"Father! father, may heaven bless and strengthen that resolution!"

"Mary, my dear child, ask God for his blessing—I am not fit—your heart is pure."

"Will you kneel with me?"

"I will, penitently."

There was a little stir of chairs in the room, during which the doctor opened the door gently, and he and Mike entered and took their places behind those already kneeling, and listened and joined in one of the most holy, because the most pure, simple outpourings of the hearts' thanksgiving they had ever heard. It was the eloquence of a grateful heart—the heart of an only child, born to love and be loved, but one which had been, through long years of anguish, pining, hoping, desponding, alternately, over the sad fault of a father, who she knew loved her most dearly, when his intellect was not blunted by rum, which often debased him to the level of a brute. Something told her now, that hope long deferred, was about to give certain promise of the accomplishment of her most ardent desires. In all the eighteen years of her life, this was the first time that she had ever seen that father kneel before the throne of heaven.

Her words were but few, but they reached the heart of every one present, and tears flowed freely. All seemed to feel "it is good to be here." Here, where a daughter was pleading for a father before the highest tribunal of justice which mortals can approach.

Mary was the first to discover that strangers were present, and had been listening, yet had bent the knee, and united in her prayer, and she blushed crimson at the thought that her humble effort had been witnessed by two strangers, whose dress indicated that they belonged to a class in life above her sphere. Then she wondered how they had got into that little family circle, and who they were. She started with an exclamation of surprise when she first saw them, but was allowed but for a single moment to feel the embarrassment of her position. The open, manly, striking countenance, and beaming intelligent eye of the doctor, as he advanced and extended his hand, reassured her, and when he said, "Dr. Field," she gave and received a warm pressure of the hand, for she felt in a moment he was a friend, and it did seem as if an over-ruling Providence had directed him there just at that juncture, for a blessed purpose.

"Oh, doctor, although a stranger, I am so glad, so very glad to see you. My mother, Dr. Field. Father."

He had still remained kneeling, with a handkerchief to his eyes, but as he caught the name of Dr. Field, he arose and grasped him by the hand, then kissed his wife and Mary, and passed out into the garden. His heart was too full—he could not speak. But fresh air and cold water,

soon restored him, and he entered the room again, as Mary often said afterwards, looking like a new man. She had never seen him look so before. Her mother had, and it reminded her of "Auld Lang Syne." He greeted them with words of kindness. Mary said the very tone of his voice was changed. He turned to where Michael was standing, almost unobserved by the others, who had been so deeply absorbed in their own thoughts and words, while he kept aloof.

"And who is this lad," said he, "a friend of yours, doctor?"

"This is the poor boy that Decker was so astonished at, because he could not persuade him to drink last night. He has been disguising himself with a suit of new clothes."

"Then, my young friend, I want to shake you by the hand, and thank you for what you have done for me; all that you have witnessed, and more that you shall witness, is owing to you."

"To me!"

"Yes, to you. I saw you, when cold, tired, hungry, resist all the arts of a rum-seller's temptations to induce you to drink, and saw his surprise that one who looked so much like one of us, should refuse; and I said to myself, what a triumph for that poor boy; and here am I, a man; why shall I not be as much of a one as this boy? And so I sat thinking of it until you, doctor, whom I had often seen taking a drink, came in; you, too, refused, and said you never would drink again, and then my mind was made up. I told you if you would come here this morning, and give

me your countenance in my undertaking, I would promise in presence of my wife and Mary, never to drink another drop of liquor as long as I live, and now I am going to do it. Give me your hand, and yours, what is your name ?”

“ Michael.”

“ Very well ; now wife and Mary—Oh, doctor, aint she a blessed angel of a girl ?”

“ She is, indeed !”

And he took all their hands in his, and looked up, and said :

“ Now as I hope for thy blessing, and for thy aid, and as I hope for the continued love and friendship of all that own these hands, I do most solemnly declare that I will for ever hereafter abstain from the foolish practice I have so long been guilty of, and never more drink a drop of intoxicating liquor.”

“ Amen,” said Dr. Field, and “ amen,” repeated each one.

“ Father, my dear father, Oh how I will pray for strength for you to resist all temptation, and then how we shall love you.”

And then she threw her arms around his neck, and he kissed her again and again, and said :

“ Mary, you know when I give my word I keep it. You shall never more weep again over a drunken father.”

“ Then we shall be so happy.”

The doctor was ready now to go, but Michael had a word to say first.

“ I heard you say that your name was Tharp. Had you a brother Zep, who used to live up near the line, in Deacon Brandon’s neighborhood ?”

"And who was bitten to death by the worm of his distillery—yes I had such a brother ; poor Zep ; and I was in a fair way to die just as he did."

"No, not just so." Michael and Dr. Field exchanged significant glances.

"Oh," said Mary, "did you know my aunt, and my poor unfortunate cousin. How are they doing now ?"

"They are in health, but very poor and live poor."

"Oh, father, I wish you would let me go and see aunt, and invite her to come and live with us ; although we have but little, mother and I will share it with them."

"So you shall. But we are not going to be so poor now ; I have a good trade, and with industry can more than support you all, and we still have our house left out of the general wreck of my property."

"There is another thing I want to go up there for ; I want to see that good boy that aunt wrote to us about ; that Mike Granly, who used to come and cut wood for them all that winter after uncle died. Oh I could hug him to my heart this minute."

"Then do it," said Dr. Field, with a merry twinkle of his laughing eye, as he caught the retreating Michael, and turned him around full in her face.

"Not him. Oh, doctor, don't make fun of me. I was in earnest."

"And so am I. This is indeed that same good boy. Michael don't hang your head. Mary don't blush. I rejoice to see a girl that has a heart. There, that is what I like."

And she did hug him to her heart, as, in the fullness of it, she had said she could."

There were now to be said the hard words of good-bye, when real friends part.

"She is almost a match for Alida," said Michael, as they left the house, while its inmates called down a shower of blessings upon their heads. They stood a few minutes on the edge of the road that Michael was to take on his solitary tramp, while the doctor gave him his final instructions. Was there a Providence in all this delay to do this good action? Let us see. It was their intention that Michael should have been off more than two hours before. While they were talking, a wagon, driven by a particular friend of the doctor's came up, and he hailed him in his hearty, earnest way?

"Halloo, Franklin, which way now?"

"First, I am going to Montpelier, and should not wonder if I went over the other side of the mountains."

"Much load?"

"Nothing much; I am going after one. Why?"

"I was just starting my young friend here off to cross the mountains, by way of the Lamoille River, but I was thinking that if he could get a ride with you, it would be far better for him to go by way of the Onion River."

"So it would, and he shall ride in welcome; I shall be glad of company. What is his name?"

"Most commonly, Mike; but in full, Michael Granly."

"Why, where have I heard that name before? It sounds familiar. Any relation of the Tharps?"

"No ; but you may possibly have heard Mary mention it, though she never saw its owner till this morning."

"Oh, have you been there—how are they all?"

"That Michael shall tell you all about as you ride."

"Oh ! now I remember ; but yet it cannot be. I was a thinking of a boy I heard Mary speak of in connection with her aunt."

"It is the same."

"Is it ? perhaps so, since you call him your friend ; that is enough to account for the change in his appearance. Has he quit drinking, too ?"

"Yes, and he is not the only one ; but of that he will tell you ; and it is a story you will be glad to hear, and it will well repay you for the ride."

"Come, get aboard then. Where does he want to go to on the other side ? To the Lake ?"

"Yes, and across it. He is going to my brother's, in York State."

"Heavens ! how lucky. Why, I never saw the like. Only think of it."

"Of what ?"

"Why, I am going to meet my brother, either in Montpelier, or at the Lake, to bring my mother home. She has been over to stay with him a while, and he will be going back with an empty wagon, and he only lives ten miles from your brother. I declare it is curious, for I suppose if I had been five minutes later, he would have been off down the other road."

"Yes, but that is not all, if he had not been engaged this morning in one of the most blessed works in the world, he would have been away at any rate. 'There is a Providence that shapes our ends, roughhew them as we will.'"

"What is it, doctor?"

"Something in which you are deeply interested. Something in which Mary is more so than in any act of her life, except it may be her marriage with you."

"Oh, doctor, that is all over. My mother is so opposed to the match, that I have given it up to gratify her ; but I never shall marry anybody else, for I have never seen such another girl as Mary Tharp."

"Nor I either. But he shall tell you all about it. Good-bye. Good-bye, Michael. Don't forget to write to me. There, God bless you."

The reader will have already seen that Franklin May had been a suitor of Mary Tharp, but in consequence of the prejudice of his mother against his marrying "that old drunkard's daughter," he had relinquished his purpose, for he had always been taught that the first duty of a good child was to respect the opinions of his mother. She was willing to believe that Mary was all that her son represented her, but then her father was a poor sot—a tavern lounge—who spent his time and money in the worst of folly, leaving his wife and daughter to work for their own support. She did not know Mary, or she might have consented ; but Franklin would not urge the matter, as his mother lived with him, and he would not introduce a wife

into the family against her consent, because he wished her to love her new daughter as well as she did himself.

"If," said she, "the old man would quit drinking, or if, what is far more likely, he should die, I would not say a word."

It can therefore be easily imagined with what a deep interest this excellent young man listened to all the details of Mike's story ; and how he yearned to clasp Mary to his heart, since her conduct upon the present occasion, had made her appear still more lovely in his estimation. It ought to be mentioned to her credit, that when Franklin proposed marriage to her, she had made it a *sine qua non*, that his mother should give her full and free consent, without which she would never give her own. Now he saw a bright prospect before him. He almost knew that her father would abide by his resolution, and he certainly knew if he did, that his mother would consent to the marriage, particularly when she became acquainted with Mary. How often he made the expression :

"How providential ; how singular, that I should have met you just at the moment I did, and how happy you have made me."

Before the end of the journey he had become warmly attached to Michael, so natural it is to love those who contribute to our happiness. At Montpelier he found a letter from his brother fixing upon a town named, near the upper end of the lake, as the place of meeting. Owing to the hostilities on lake Champlain, he had not been able to

cross lower down. This prolonged their journey some three days more, but the time passed fleetly, for never were two travellers more agreeable to each other.

The meeting between Franklin and his mother and brother was such as always occurs among the members of such an affectionate family. His brother Jefferson, was considerably older than himself, and Franklin always looked up to him for counsel and advice, and as he had informed him all about Mary, and how much he felt disappointed at his mother's unwillingness for him to marry her, Jefferson had been talking the matter all over with her, and she had come to the conclusion that she would get acquainted with Mary, and if she found her such a girl as Franklin represented, she would waive the other objection, and consent to their marriage.

After the first greetings were over, she very much surprised Franklin, by kindly inquiring after Mary.

"Oh, mother, I cannot tell you, only that she is well, but such a piece of news; but I must get Michael to tell you that."

"Michael! why who is that?"

He told her all the preliminaries, and then introduced Michael, who repeated in detail, all the incidents of the visit to the Tharp's, upon that morning with Dr. Field; so the whole evening was spent in talking over the remarkable events connected with that visit, and when they retired for the night, it would be difficult to say which of the four were most in love with that noble specimen of a Green Mountain Girl—the good Mary Tharp.

Mrs. May, and her eldest son, were quite as much taken

with Michael, as Franklin had been ; so that while Jefferson took charge of him to speed him on his journey, the others parted with him, with feelings that make the eye moist, and the heart swell with emotion.

And this was the poor, outcast, friendless boy, six months ago a hanger-on around Deacon Brandon's old still-house, with no hope but a life of misery, and a death of woe. This, Oh, woman, is the fruit of thy holy influence. Alida, thy good heart and blessed deeds deserved a better fate than fell to thy lot !

We shall now leave these actors in our little drama of life, each to pursue their own journey to a pleasant, and fortunate termination, while we bring forward ; some other scenes that transpired in the meantime.

As Dr. Field turned back after parting with Mike, he met Mary at the little gate of their cottage ; he thought he had never seen so sweet a face in his life. It was a little more of the long than round order, but with a good full chin, middling sized mouth, with large white teeth, showing between lips very red and full ; the nose was straight and smooth, with open nostrils, indicating easy breathing ; the cheek bones full, and cheeks slightly crimson ; the eyes were neither black, blue, grey, nor hazel, but in different lights appeared first one, then the other, yet such as made everybody exclaim, " What lovely eyes !" The eye-brows were arched and full ; the forehead just high and prominent enough to set off the upper part of the face, while the hair, the bonny brown hair, crowned as perfect a form as ever grew to womanhood, in the pure fresh air of the Green

Mountains. Her hands were not as delicate as would please a fop, or fashionable lady of the present day, for they were enlarged by hard daily toil.

"Doctor," said she, with a full, sweet voice, "are you going up to the line from here?"

"I shall go up in a day or two. What can I do for you, Mary?"

"I have written a hasty note to my aunt; do you know she is a double aunt? for mother and she are sisters—telling her briefly what has transpired, and father and mother want to know, if she won't come down and live with us, and I should like you to take this letter up, and if you could spare time, call and talk with her a few minutes."

"I will do it willingly, and with pleasure, but I will tell you a better plan. I will send that letter up to-day, by a man I know, who is going right by the house; and let me see, this is Thursday; on Saturday at nine o'clock, I will call here, and give you a seat in my dearborn, and put you down safe before night at your aunt's; and on Monday, I shall have a large ox-wagon coming down empty, and if you like, you can all come down with that together, with all of her household stuff. Will you go?"

"Wait a minute, till I ask my mother."

"You are a good girl to ask, as you always do, but I have heard it all, and say go, with all my heart; I am sure, we ought to be very thankful to Dr. Field," said Mrs. Tharp, who had been standing in the door-way unobserved.

"Very well, that is all settled. I shall call, rain or shine; I never stop for the weather."

“ And I will be ready. *Bon jour, mon ami.*” “ *Bon jour, sweet Mary.*” The doctor had paid his bill, and ordered his horse before he left the tavern, not expecting to be absent five minutes, so that he mounted, and rode off, without entering the house. It was well he did so, for just then there was a storm breaking out inside, that would have made any common sized thunder-gust shed tears ; and there is no telling but that some of the flashes of lightning might have fallen upon the head of the doctor, for his name was severely anathematised. I believe nothing will make a woman more furious, than to find that she has been overreached, out-witted, made a fool of, or made a fool of herself.

Betty had had sundry misgivings, from the time she first saw “ the young gentleman ” in the morning ; and the more she thought of it, the more strong her suspicions grew, that he and the ragged boy of the kitchen were one and the same person. She hinted her suspicions once to Mrs., Decker, who told her that “ she was a stupid fool, to think of such a thing.” But this did not convince Betty that she was any more likely to be the stupid fool in this case, than her mistress ; but she had then no way to satisfy herself. She agreed with John to ask the doctor, but he was so long away that she was tired of waiting. She met with proof positive, where she least expected it. She went up to make the beds, and without any definite idea why, she entered the doctor’s room first, and there, spread out upon a chair, with a sort of malicious purpose to show how the lady had been deceived, were the cast-off garments that Michael

wore when he was in the kitchen looking for his supper. "Who is the stupid fool now?" exultingly said Betty. "I will call her up here to see for herself, if she should pitch me neck and heels out of the window."

Betty went down to hunt for madam, and in doing so she met with Decker, and told him the whole story. He had heard nothing of it before, and never thought but what his wife had understood all about the matter of metamorphosing a ragged boy into a young gentleman. He laughed now ready to split his sides, at the idea that his wife, who was always bragging of her cuteness, had been so completely humbugged. It would be a handle for him for months, to silence her when she mounted the "high faluting strain." Betty simply asked her to come up-stairs a minute, to look at something curious in Dr. Field's room.

As she entered, Betty pointed to the chair, and asked her if she knew anything about those clothes. The fire began to flash out of her eyes, for she comprehended the truth about as quick as Betty, but as if to make assurance doubly sure, she examined the pockets and found two or three scraps of paper, which she looked at intently for a moment, and then said :

"What did that fellow say his name was?"

"Michael Granly, ma'am, just the same as is wrote on them ere papers."

"Yes, yes, and a pretty fool I have been made, with their Michael Granly. Oh, I could cut his throat. Go and tell Decker to come here, instanter ; and tell John to put the doctor's horse back in the stable, and lock the door, and

She lay motionless upon her bed, with her clothes on as she wore them the day before. Betty tried to get John to creep in and unlock the door. She might as well have tried to coax him to go into the graveyard after dark. They reported facts to Decker, and he proceeded at once to force the door. They found the bottle empty, and life extinct. She had swallowed fire, and burnt out life. Her violent temper had been the cause of her death. She had done what ten thousand had done before her, and what ten times that number have done since, and are doing every day. She had resorted to the bottle as others do, to drown trouble, disappointment, vexation, sorrow, and thus instead of drowning those, had drowned life. It is a fate so common that we look upon it without a shudder, and scarcely lift a hand or give a word, much less a dollar, to avert the evil from ourselves or fellow creatures. In this instance it only had the effect of closing the bar-room one day, while the last rites of a Christian community were performed for the dead, but it did not close the mouth of the partner of the deceased, even for that short time ; for he went to bed the night after he had deposited her in her last resting-place, as usual with him, in that particular state that he called "happy." Perhaps that is a proper term, but if so, it is a very beastly state of happiness.

Here the curtain falls, and again the scene changes, not to introduce new characters, but to bring forward some of the old ones.

CHAPTER IX.

The prospect of doing a good action brings happiness—Woman confides in man and is deceived—A walk in the woods—Alida and Mary become acquainted and are friends—The Smuggler's bridge and what was seen there—Another trick upon the customs officers—Human wolves on a lamb's track—The fury of jealousy, among men and brutes—The demon of the Distillery—The conspiracy for a sham marriage, and plans to counteract it—Dr. Field in the field, with Parson White, out-plots the plotters, who are arrested as spies—A wedding in prospect—Disappointment—The minister don't come—Unexpected arrival—Married at last—Vague suspicion of a double marriage—Waking and Dreaming—Looking through the grates—Visiting the sick—Gratitude—A queer Doctor's prescription—Repentance—Not yet quite lost.

THURSDAY and Friday were long days to Mary Tharp, but like all other days, they had an end. She was constantly thinking of the happy journey—pleasant because it would carry happiness to the heart of her aunt and her poor unfortunate cousin. She was happy to see that her father felt almost as much anxiety about her truly benevolent project as she did herself.

"I have been," said he as he pressed his daughter affectionately to his heart, "ever since you knew me, an incubus upon you and your blessed mother ; but now I am going to make amends ; and I am delighted to see you take such an interest in a cause that should have interested me long ago ; and would, if I had been a man. Your aunt will be no burden to us—she is an excellent weaver and can earn her own liv-

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ing, and more, if she has a chance ; she only wants a home, and some friends, which she shall have."

Punctual to his appointment, Dr. Field came. Mary almost regretted having to leave, for this was the day of Mrs. Decker's funeral, when every member of a New England village in the good old time, felt under obligations to hear the funeral sermon, if they did not respect the deceased enough to follow the hearse to the grave. In this case it would not have been far to follow, for, according to old-time custom, the windows of the meeting-house looked down upon the burying-ground located in the very centre of the living population.

The delight of the widow Tharp and her daughter at the visit of the almost angel Mary, and at the prospect of escape from a neighborhood grown hateful to them, can hardly be conceived.

Dr. Field remained but a few minutes, for he had important business to attend to, with Alida Blythe and her mother, which he finished before night, so that the inheritance settled upon Alida was transferred to her mother, beyond the reach of any legal claim her husband would have upon it. He then arranged with her to accede to any proposition of Nat when he returned next week, to consummate the marriage.

"But what if he should make a sham of it, as Mike suspected?"

"I will take care of that ; only let me know the time fixed, and I will see that no deception is practised, if there is even a disposition to do so, which I cannot believe."

"Nor I ; if I could, I would break off the engagement even without hesitation ; for a man who would deceive his betrothed in that manner, would deceive his wife in a worse one. And yet I am practising deception in regard to the money ; but you taught me, and must bear a part of the blame, if there is any."

"Willingly I will bear it all. This measure was only taken as a necessary precaution, as I told you before, to prevent me or any one else from wresting your property from you for your husband's debts."

"Yes, and I believe it is all right, though I cannot distrust Nat, unless when he has been drinking. He always has appeared to me the very soul of honor and love. His only fault, his habit of indulging too freely in drink, but that I am confident I can cure him of."

Confiding woman ! how thou art deceived by man, when he has woven the potent spell of love around thy heart.

The next day, Sunday, after meeting, the doctor asked Alida to go over to the widow Tharp's, to see Mary, in whose history she had become deeply interested.

"I will get up the horse, and we will ride over."

"Oh no, not on my account ; it is only two miles through the woods, and we can cross the creek by the 'Smuggler's Bridge.' I believe you know where it is, doctor ?"

He smiled, but was non-committal. The bridge took its name from a desperate rencontre of six customs officers with a single individual, always believed to be the doctor, but never known, who sowed cowhage among them, and thus

effected his escape. They afterwards pursued him so close that he abandoned his sleigh—an old one, of course, with a few contraband goods—took out his horse and flew to the woods.

While they were intent upon securing this prize, Jason Inwright came whistling down the road, driving his old stags, and a sled-load of hay.

“Halloo, Jason! where now?”

“Wall, you see, I thought as how it looked like it would rain to-morrow, and take off all the snow, or at any rate spile the sledden, and as the boys were nigh out of hay over to the Shingle Camp, I reckoned I had better go over to-night. I wish one of ye would go along, not that I’m a mite afraid to go through the woods, but just for company.”

At this evident betrayal of fear, they were particularly delighted, and had a good laugh at Jason, so that he drove off a little vexed—as they thought—but hauling hay at night was so much in keeping with this odd genius, that they never suspected that hidden in the centre of that load were six thousand dollars’ worth of goods, and that the owner of the sleigh, whoever he was, and the owner of Jason’s load, were one and the same individual.

It is needless to say that Alida and Mary were mutually delighted with each other, for their natural dispositions were congenial. Each possessed a disposition to do good. Of course, Mary had to tell her all about the visit of the doctor and Michael, and how much she liked the latter. How much more she would have liked him, could she have

known what an effect he had already wrought upon the mind of Frank May and his mother ; for since her father's resolution to reform, love and hope had already begun to nestle again in her young heart.

Then Alida and Mrs. Tharp had so many kind words to say of "that boy," that he grew quite a hero, and they all voted that "he would make somebody yet," for which the world would be principally indebted to Dr. Field ; for though Alida had sown the seed, yet thistles might have sprung up and destroyed its growth, if the doctor had not came with his timely aid to assist in tilling the ground.

So delighted were those two girls with each other, and so rapidly sped the time, that it was dusk before Alida said, "I declare I must go home, or it will be pitch dark."

Dr. Field proposed that Mary should go home with Alida, and go down with him next day, but she declined.

"No, there will be a good deal of work to do in the morning, to pack up, and I will stay and help aunt, and then keep her company on the way."

It was a noble resolution, and Alida could not, would not say, "Oh, do go," much as she would have been pleased with her pleasant company ; and so they kissed good night and parted.

It was quite dusk, nearly dark, when the doctor and Alida reached the Smuggler's Bridge ; so much so that they did not observe two men who came up from another woods path just as they reached the bridge, notwithstanding they passed within ten feet of them. Alida and the doctor stopped a few minutes upon the bridge, listening to

the wind as it came up the valley, sighing through the old hemlocks, in wild woods music. Both were silent for a brief space, and then commenced a conversation about Mary and her old lover. Two pair of ears were strained to catch the conversation ; but without being able to get at the thread of their discourse, they caught the words, "lovely girl" — "sweet as an angel" — "loves him" — "happy" — "such a place for romantic lovers" — etc., etc., quite enough for such minds as Scale Williams' and John Longwood's, who were the listeners, to construe into something criminal between the parties in conversation in that lonely spot.

"Won't this be nuts for Nat," said one of them, "when he comes back?"

"The shameless hussy ! to be out here with that scamp, listening to his love passages, and telling him how well she loves him, and all that stuff."

"Yes, and if it hadn't been for us, Nat would have been fool enough to marry her."

"Ah, she can play the prude with us young fellows, and yet have an appointment with a married man. But we will humble her."

Such was the conversation of those worthies, after the object of their malignancy had left the bridge, little suspecting that worse wild beasts than wolves were upon her track.

In two days afterwards Nat arrived, apparently well satisfied with his journey, for he had accomplished one purpose he had in view when he started—he had married Maria Louise. We will do him the credit, too, to state

that he had also determined to give up the nefarious plot that had been concocted before he left, for the ruin of Alida ; but the conspirators watched their opportunity when he was under just the right amount of whisky influence, and then told him, with abundant additions and illustrations, about the scene on the bridge.

It is a certain fact, that a man may be dead to every other feeling but jealousy, but if you can arouse that, he suddenly grows furious. This is even the case among the animals that we call brutes, though why, when some men are equally brutish, is not so very clear.

Nat had not been a week under the influence of bad company and bad liquor, before all the bad passions of his nature were sufficiently aroused to fit him for any deed but a manly one. The demon of the distillery had him in his power, and his imps were leading him as they have ten thousand others, to what appeared a bed of roses, but what would prove a bed of thorns and hissing serpents. Such is the effect of liquor upon the human system everywhere—it destroys humanity and makes man a brute. No fabled Demon that has ever afflicted the human family, bears any comparison, in the amount of evil done, to the demon of the distillery. John Longwood and Scale Williams told their story with abundant amplification of their own ; how Dr. Field had spent two nights at widow Blythe's, and how Alida and him were out in the woods till after dark, in a very unfrequented lonely place—until they finally succeeded in making Nat believe that Alida was as bad as he was himself. How could she be as bad as her traducers, who had learned, of the

first person to whom they told their villainous story, that there was no foundation for scandal to rest upon? because Alida and the doctor had only been upon one of the holy missions of the Sabbath. But this was no bar to their wicked determination—they had a slight cause, but by management they could enlarge it to suit their purpose. Alida's truthfulness and simplicity, and entire innocence of all thoughts of guile, gave aid to the conspirators; for she told Nat, as a matter of news, about Dr. Field's visit there, and how she went over to Mrs. Tharp's, and did not get back through the woods until after dark, and what a fright she had at the Smuggler's Bridge, fancying that she saw two men trying to creep up nearer where the doctor and she were talking together."

"Talking there at that time of night?"

"Yes, talking. Why, how queer you look."

"Oh, do I? I was perhaps surprised that you should be stopping on the bridge in the dark, and wondering what you could be talking about at that time of night. Why did you not go straight home, if it was so dark?"

"Why, it was not late; it was the trees that made it dark all around, except just a little spot where we were, where the stars peeped through and were reflected in the water below, so beautiful; you know how fond I am of such things."

"Yes, when you have good company, I know you are."

"True, that makes the lovely scenes of nature enchanting always, but still I love to go alone into the woods ——."

"To meet company?"

The meeting that he had witnessed with Michael came to his recollection, and rankled in his heart as the venom of that green-eyed monster which torments the world can only rankle, and embitter our existence.

"No not that, but to contemplate the majesty of that power which could create these stupendous rocks and giant trees, and at this season deck all nature with springing buds and leaves and flowers, and robe the fields in green. It makes me happier and better every time I go abroad. I do wish that you could enjoy these things as I do. I must really teach you how after we are married."

"Well, when shall that be?"

"I am ready whenever you think best, unless you are willing to wait until your father and my mother will consent for us to be married at home."

"That is hopeless—it is useless to wait."

"Then take the other course. I have pledged my word, and intend to abide by it."

"Say next Thursday night, then. We will go to Rufe Howell's, and that you know is right on the line, and you can be married upon either side you like."

"I shall try to be ready then."

"Very well, good-bye, till that time."

The first thing that Alida did, was to write a note to Dr. Field, to apprise him of the fact, as she had agreed to do, though of what possible advantage it would be to her she could not imagine, for she had not a shade of suspicion now, of the honesty of Nat's purposes.

It was arranged by Nat and his coadjutors in this scheme of iniquity, that they should meet him at the appointed hour at Howell's, where Blythe White was to act the parson, and perform the ceremony, with no one to witness it but his two companions, who were the originators of a piece of wickedness for which heaven will not forget to visit upon them its just vengeance.

Alida heard or saw nothing of Dr. Field, till just at dusk Thursday evening, when a boy brought her a scrap of paper, torn from the letter, with his address, which she sent him, with these words written in pencil—"all right—go ahead."

The doctor "had business" in that neighborhood that evening, and watched the operations of all concerned—saw Blythe, John, and Scale go off together, a little before night on the road to Howell's, which confirmed his suspicions that Michael had heard aright. The doctor knew Parson White as a straightforward, honest man, and thought the best thing for him to do, was to go straight to him and lay open the whole case, and the grounds of his suspicions.

It was the best plan he could have adopted. The old man entered into the doctor's views heartily. He had urged sister Blythe to give her consent, since he saw the young folks were determined to marry, and till now, he had thought Nat every way worthy of her. He did not know how far he had gone in his career of inebriation, but could readily see that it was all owing to that cause, that he was

now acting in the manner he did ; though why he should do so, he could not understand ; and could not believe that Blythe would lend himself to such a wicked scheme.

“ But if it is so, doctor, we will outplot the plotters. I will take my mare and ride up to Howell’s with you after dark, taking care not to be seen, and you are pretty good at expedients, and I will trust to you to get rid of my bad boy, just at the nick of time, and then introduce me to the truants, and I will take care to tie the knot fast enough, so it will never slip, I will warrant you.”

With this understanding, they set off about fifteen minutes after Nat and Alida started from the Deacon’s, apparently to go home, but really to mount ready saddled horses, and ride off towards the line. It was pretty well contrived—Mrs. Blythe thought Alida was at Deacon Brandon’s, and they thought Nat was at Mrs. Blythe’s. Parson White and the doctor took a woods-path, well known to the latter, and arrived some minutes before the others. Howell was a particular friend of the doctor’s, and ready to forward any plan he suggested. Howell said the three young men were together in a private room, and it immediately suggested itself to the doctor’s mind, that they were disguising Blythe to act his part, and that put him upon a track he was sure would lead to a safe termination. He stepped over to the barracks, the commanding officer of which he was well acquainted with, and mentioned his suspicions “ that one Blythe White, from the other side of the line, was in the ‘ Line Tavern ’ in disguise, probably for the purpose of acting as a spy. He thought, perhaps, the officer

might do well to have him and his two companions taken into custody."

"But I say, captain," continued the doctor, "as his cousin has just arrived, and is about to be married by the old parson, this young man's father, to a son of the deacon of his church, let the arrest be made in the quietest manner possible, so as not to disturb the wedding party."

"It shall be done. I will send a fellow we call Cute Bryson ; he will do it so cute that the fellows will hardly know it themselves, till they are locked up in the guard-house."

It was a cunningly arranged plan, and neatly executed, almost as soon as designed. How the old parson did chuckle over it, when the doctor told him what had been done, for he thought it would be a fit punishment for them to spend a night in the guard-house.

By this time Nat was in a state of tribulation, for by an understanding with the doctor, Howell was as perfect a "know nothing" as any of the present day, as far as regarded his companions. After waiting till hope of their arrival had become exhausted, they were about to set out on their return, as Alida insisted upon going back that night, and Nat did not dare to insist upon her staying unless the ceremony had been performed. Howell ventured to offer a word of advice, that as Nat's friend, the "young minister"—young reprobate—had failed to come, it wa'n't worth while to go back now without being married, and he insisted upon calling in one of the nicest old parson's in the world, who was in the other room, and had just

taken his supper and a stiff mug of flip, and felt in glorious humor for a wedding.

"How much like Uncle White," thought Alida. "I do wonder if all ministers drink flip."

Nat made a great many objections and excuses, but Howell could not see the validity of any of them, and opened the door and called in his wife and daughter, who both joined their forces to his.

"I declare," said the young lady, "I will go right straight and get Dr. Field, and we two will stand up with them, and that nice old minister shall say the ceremony, and then he may kiss the bride and bridesmaid too; don't you say so, miss? Never mind, you need not say it, you look it;" and away she ran, full of the cause, as young girls always are when there is a wedding on hand. Back she came in two minutes, with the doctor, and then she was perfectly delighted to find the couple and him were old acquaintances. Of course she did not know it before, and of course Alida was very much surprised to see the doctor there; and then she was ashamed that he had caught her in a sort of an elopement. Nat was not surprised to meet him there, and would not have been if he had met him on the peaks of the Andes, or in the crater of Vesuvius. He was just the kind of Yankee character, always turning up when least expected. Nat was embarrassed at the doctor's presence, for he thought it boded him no good, and still more embarrassed when he inquired, "Why on earth they did not go to good old Parson White, and get married, since

they had determined on it ; you know he 'cried you off' six months ago, and that stands good yet."

Nat stammered some incoherent reply, but Alida said :

" Why, you know, doctor, our folks object to our getting married yet a while, but Nat said I was of age now, and so we came up here, where we expected to meet a young minister, a particular friend of Nat's, who begged the privilege of marrying us, and yet somehow he has failed to keep his appointment, and so we are going back."

" What, without being married ? Oh, no, no, no."

This was a general expression of all present, and Howell and his wife, and three or four girls had come in to see the wedding.

Lydia, the volunteer bridesmaid said, " Father, do go and ask the old minister in the other room, to come in and marry them, and if he won't do it, we will send for Dr. Maiden-homme, and he will, and right glad of the job, but he shan't kiss the bridesmaid."

" Why, Lydia," said her mother, " how you do go on."

" I can't help it mother, I do want to have a wedding so bad."

Nat made sundry excuses ; " he did not like to be married by a stranger, he had rather wait for his friend, or go back to Parson White, etc. etc. Upon the whole, he had made up his mind, that he would be married by Parson White, and nobody else. He was quite ready for that, to-night, or any other time."

" Then you shall have it your own way," said Dr. Field.

Lydia had almost began to despair of having that extreme gratification of a young lady, a wedding, when her father entered with Parson White. As soon as Alida caught sight of him, she flew to his arms—she was always a pet of his—and kissed him most fondly.

“Oh, uncle, I am so glad to see you. Did Providence send you here at this juncture?”

“Of course it did, my dear girl; it overrules all things. And so you ran away from your old uncle, did you, you young minx, to get married?”

“Oh, forgive me, do, but I did it to please Nat; now he is so glad you have come, for he was just insisting upon our going back to be married by you. He said he would not be married by anybody else.”

Was Nat glad that Parson White had come? Probably, if he could have had his choice, he would, that minute, much rather have taken his chance at seeing another old fellow, horns, hoof, tail, and all. He would have retreated, but he could not; he was enfiladed upon every side, by a host, against which it was useless to combat. He had but one hope, if married by Parson White, the ceremony must be performed on the south side of the line, and he might thus escape the charge of bigamy, as the first took place in Canada. He stood pale and trembling, as a culprit before the judge, just about to pronounce his doom. His agitation was attributed to the fact of being caught in his elopement, before its object was accomplished. None doubted his readiness to enter into the matrimonial bonds. Yes, Dr. Field, began to have some doubts, that all was not right,

and when the old parson said, "If any one has aught to say why this man and woman should not be joined together in the holy bonds of matrimony, let him speak now, or else, ever afterwards hold his peace," he was on the point of saying, "stop, I have objections." The words fairly trembled upon his tongue, ready to roll out, like a sudden peal of thunder, to disturb the little group gathered in a circle around the "happy couple." Such a word would have been very like a bomb-shell, thrown into the midst of a camp, from an unseen and unexpected enemy ; however, ere he could bring his thoughts to utterance, he reflected, and said to himself, "What can I say why they should not be united ? Not one word. I know nothing—perhaps, after all, am mistaken in my suspicions, which are but vague at best. Upon the whole, it is better to let things take their course." So he reasoned to himself ; in spite of all his reasoning, he could not help thinking that something mysterious was connected with the whole business, and something so impressed his mind that this was a double marriage, that he could hardly restrain himself, even after the benediction had been pronounced over the newly-married couple, of uttering his thoughts, and thus preventing the consummation of the marriage, until the matter could be investigated. Why did he not think to go to Blythe White, who after being left to his own sober, second thoughts, in the solitude of one of the lock-up rooms of the guard-house, began to reflect upon the iniquity of the plot to ruin his poor cousin, and then he would gladly have told all he knew, to save her from a fate bitter as death. In vain he begged the sentry to allow him

to send a line to a friend outside. It was no use ; the fellow had received strict orders to allow no communication whatever with the prisoner until morning, and he was determined to do the first duty of a soldier—obey orders. If these orders had not been so strict, no marriage would have taken place ; or if the information which he would have communicated had not arrived in time to prevent the ceremony, it would be before the wedding-party broke up, for the supper and general “good time,” which wedding and wine brings on, kept the guests from their beds till a late hour in the night, or rather in the morning, and when they did seek them, if one word from Blythe had reached Dr. Field’s ear, the bride and bridegroom would have been furnished with separate lodging-rooms upon their wedding-night.

All but Dr. Field slept late the next morning ; he as usual was early astir, and out on a morning walk, while all around was still, calm, sweet—such only as can be found among the habitations of men, in some of our New England villages, just after daylight of a May morning, before the inhabitants awake to the busy hum of their industrious lives. As he wandered on beyond the little collection of wooden houses, every one of which could boast a garden worthy of a more wealthy owner, he became so absorbed in thoughts—suspicions—of the things connected with the previous evening that he was quite unconscious whither his steps had led him, and was startled more than he would have been to meet a score of bayonets, when fully conscious of the approach of a foe, at hearing his own name called, apparently close to his

ear. Although walking, he was dreaming, and as much asleep in one sense, as he had been any time before he left his bed. It was no wonder he started, when he heard the voice so close to his ear call out :

“ Dr. Field, Oh, Doctor, let me speak with you a minute.”

The voice seemed familiar, but while only half waking from his day dream, he did not recognise it. He looked up and found himself close to a grated window of the barrack, with an unrecognised haggard face peering out upon him ; the eyes were red, as though they had wept all night and slept none. The face did not wear a natural expression, for it had been painted and ornamented with false whiskers, and crowned with a wig for disguise the evening before. The doctor was just going to say “ Who are you ?” when a bayoneted musket was thrust before him and, “ no talking with prisoners,” uttered in a stern voice, and he was peremptorily ordered off.

“ Oh, doctor, are they married ?” came from the grates, and he replied, “ Yes,” which was followed by a heavy groan, and a sound as though the prisoner had fallen to the floor. The doctor was now fully awake, and sensible who had addressed him, but still more distressed at the question, and apparent effect of the answer upon the questioner. The impression that had haunted him all night, was suddenly confirmed. He turned to the sentinel and said, “ take me to the officer of the day.”

“ What for ? I don't think you have done anything. I saw you approach as though walking in your sleep, and how you started when spoken to. If you had undertaken to

“speak with a prisoner, it would have been my duty to take you to the officer. I don’t think you meant any offence, and besides, I believe the man inside is crazy, by the way he has run on all my watch.”

“Well, I wish to see the officer about this man. I know he is crazy, and I suppose he has got into some difficulty on that account.”

“Oh, if that is it, God bless you, come this way, and I will pass you to the next sentry, and his walk reaches the guard-room.”

“Thank you. I see you have a heart. Will you accept a trifle?” handing him a half dollar.

“I will, as a providential gift, for I surely need it. I have a sick child and no money to get some necessary medicine. British soldiers are poorly paid.”

“I knew it, or I would not have offered it. But I will do more—where is your child. I will go and see it; I am a physician.”

“And yet one of our enemies, and offer such kindness, without hope of reward, when I could not get our own physician to look in without his fee in advance, though I offered to pledge him a month’s pay. If I live to see this war over, and my time out, I will settle south of the line, you may be sure of that. Here, do you see that window? the lamp is still burning. I suppose her poor mother has fallen asleep, watching as only a mother can watch, over the sick bed of a dying child.”

The doctor was about to go to see the sick, before he visited the well, when the soldier called after him to stop a

moment, as he heard the relief just turning out, and in ten minutes he could go with him. He did so, and they found the room as neat and comfortable as the utmost skill of a good wife could make the home of poverty. Just as her husband had predicted, the poor, toil-worn mother had fallen asleep upon the camp-chest, while the child, a sweet little girl of six, with a profusion of dark curls, lay in a sort of stupor upon the hard bed of her soldier father. That the mother did not sleep easy was evident, by the fact that she sprang to her feet at the very first creak of the door, rubbing her eyes, while she said "Oh, what is it, dear? Don't cry, mother is here. Oh, George, is it you? I thought I heard Georgiana cry. She is very sick, George."

"And you have been watching all night. But here is the doctor; not our doctor, but one from the other side; he has volunteered to come and look at our darling."

"I am afraid it will do no good, as we have no money to pay him, or buy medicine."

"Pay he does not ask, and here is money."

"Then God has heard my prayer. And how strange, too; I dreamed that you came in with a doctor, and I believe as I live this gentleman looks just as he did in my dream, and said our little girl would get well."

"And so he says now," said Dr. Field, who had been busy examining the child; "she has got the measles, and they are coming out finely, and as she is a robust child, I venture to promise you, that she will get well. There, take that prescription, and go down to Howell's, and I will call in again by and by, and tell you how to use the medicines."

"The saffron tea you will make at once, and let her drink it freely. She will be up in two days."

It was a queer doctor's prescription, but did not surprise Howell any, though it did the soldier, who was not so well acquainted with the eccentricities of the physician as he was. Besides the medicine, a loaf of wheat bread, some butter, preserves, jelly, tea, coffee, sugar, and to-morrow a pot of chicken-broth, were all ordered at the doctor's expense. The soldier refused to take them, but Howell told him "he must, and must come again next day," and added, on his own account, "and every day until the little girl gets well, and then tell the mother to come and bring the child."

The soldier was overwhelmed with gratitude for the favor, coming as it did from the Yankees, and it made him still more anxious for the time when he could cross the line, and become one of the "universal nation."

Having prescribed both food and medicine for the soldier's wife and child, the doctor lost no time in making his way to the room where Blythe White had spent the most miserable night of his life, shut up alone with a guilty conscience, besides the fear that he might be treated as a spy; but that and the usual punishment awarded to those taken in the act, did not disturb him half as much as the knowledge of the part he had acted towards Alida. He thought, too, that Nat might be placed in such a situation, that he would be compelled to call in a regular minister, and thus not only ruin Alida, but send himself to the penitentiary for the crime of bigamy. All night he felt that one word from

him would save them ; and yet, as it often happens in our dreams, that one word he could not speak. When Dr. Field answered yes to his question, he sank exhausted to the floor. A sense of guilt, shame, and regret overpowered him. It was a painful night, yet he reverted to it years afterwards, as one that marked the commencement of the first happy period of his life, for it was the first of repentance for past errors, and the first of a firm resolve never to destroy the manhood of his nature again in the orgies of that old still-house. He had not yet come to the resolution of teetotal abstinence ; that came afterwards, and clung to him through life. He was not by nature bad, but he had long been under the influence of bad companions, and had drowned every compunction of conscience in the poison which flowed from that destroying worm of Deacon Brandon's distillery. He needed some great calamity ; some terrible shock, to arouse him to a sense of his guilt and folly ; something like the present to check him in his down-hill road to ruin and the drunkard's grave.

He was almost frenzied to hear from Dr. Field, that Nat and Alida had been married by his own father, and then he made a full confession of the part he had taken, and all that he knew of Nat's first marriage.

"Still," said he, "Nat might have lied about that, and then this will be all right, for I know that Alida loves him better than any other person on earth, and she is a good girl, too good for him."

"Let us act, then, upon that principle. Do not mention a word to any living being, that you have a suspicion of a

previous marriage, for the merest hint to Alida would embitter her life for ever."

"I know it ; but what are we to do ? John Longwood and Scale Williams will fairly gloat over the opportunity of revenge upon the poor girl ; for all the iniquity of this scheme is theirs, though I do not excuse myself for participating. They are a couple of heartless villains. When it was all still here in the night, I could hear them snoring away as though they were sleeping innocently in their own beds at home, while I"—

"Was doing just what you will look back to with pleasure—shedding bitter tears of sorrow and repentance."

"Yes, for which I thank you with all my heart. But do you think you can get me out of limbo as easy as you got us in ?"

"Without a doubt."

"Then the next question is, how shall we keep Scale's and John's tongues still ?"

The doctor dropped his head in his hands, and sat absorbed in his own thoughts about two minutes. Then looked up with a smile of satisfaction, and said, "Yes, that will do."

"What will do, doctor ?"

"We must not let them go back. You shall write a letter, which I will take care to have handed in to them on the point of a bayonet in the course of the day. In that you shall state that your father—call him the old man—and Field came up and got you out, but that you have got to keep dark or clear out, for the whole secret has leaked

out, and if they come back, Field swears that he will have you all sent to the penitentiary for conspiracy, to get Alida married to a man already married, or else punish you all for a worse crime ; and Nat is so mad at the failure, that he will testify against you ; and finally, conclude, by an offer to bribe the sentinel to let them out. Tell them you will get somebody to take their clothes and things to them, at some place you can name, and for them to keep on that side of the line until they can get away entirely. Tell them, also, to write to you at Rochester, New York ; that may draw them off that way, or at any rate, make them think you have gone there. What do you think of the plan ?”

“That it will work admirably. If I had a small sum of money to enclose to them, I have no doubt they would use it to put themselves out of the way of danger, for they are both cowards.”

“As villains generally are. Very well, you shall have the money. And now I will hurry to the commandant, and make my arrangements. Rig yourself up, and come down to Howell’s as soon as your door is set open, and we will get our breakfast and be off, for we have a good deal to do to accomplish our purposes before night.”

“Is my father at Howell’s ?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, how can I meet him with all this guilt upon my conscience ?”

“Just as every erring son should meet his father—with most sincere repentance, and solemn assurance that you will reform, and with his aid, that you will lead a different

life in future. How your good old father will rejoice—he will kill the fatted calf when his prodigal son returns.”

“Yes, and my mother—oh! my mother never shall shed bitter tears again over her miserable son. I am not yet quite lost. I have been blind, but my eyes are opened, and I pray God they may remain so in future.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The A B C's of a state prison education—Who taught them—An old fashioned wedding breakfast—Wine refused for the first time—Its effects—The best temperance sermon—Who are our enemies—Lost friends found—A runaway party returned—"Toasting the happy pair," at Deacon Brandon's—Selecting the beverage—The distiller's argument—A short sermon, with a moral application—Sowing of seed that has produced a good crop.

THE meeting between Blythe and his father may be more easily imagined than described. It made the old man's heart so glad that he wept freely, but not bitter tears of sorrow, as he had often done over the failings of his only child. Little did he think that he taught that son to get drunk, as surely as he taught him his A B C's. The sippings from his own mug of flip, or sweetened toddy ; the frequent half glass of wine at a wedding, before he was big enough to swallow a whole one ; or the daily drinks from the cider mug, were so many lessons of that "preparatory course," which fitted him to enter upon his collegiate one at Deacon Brandon's distillery, or some other similar institution, where young men are "finished off" for a life at Sing Sing, or death at the gallows.

Blythe met his cousin Alida with a blush, as he thought of the mean part he had acted, while she was all cheerful-

ness and cordiality. "Ignorance is bliss," thought he, and while it is so, let her enjoy it.

At the first opportunity he drew Nat aside, and made some hasty explanations ; telling him "of their arrest as spies, but hiding the fact that Dr. Field procured it ; and finally urging him to give up all thoughts of Maria Louise, and become a sober man, a good husband to a good, loving wife, and settle down, and be steady in all time to come." All this Nat readily promised—perhaps intended to perform.

It was at a somewhat late breakfast hour, when the "wedding party" assembled in the little parlor of Mrs. Howell, around a table covered with a cloth made of flax that was pulled, rotted, dressed, spun, wove, and bleached, by the mother—an old-fashioned New England mother—and her daughters ; for, notwithstanding they lived on the north side of the line, they were true Yankees, and with an eye to business, the house, a portion of which was tavern, and a portion store, stood so that the line of 45° passed through the centre of the rooms.

Those who sip a little tea or coffee, and eat a small fragment of dry toast for breakfast, may cry, "how vulgar," at an exhibit of the bill of fare of a breakfast party, forty years ago, in a family of the kind I have indicated. Let us look at a few of the dishes. Tea, coffee, rich cream and sugar, and a great mug of home brewed "spring beer," and a pitcher of sweet milk, supplied the drinkables. A large dish of milk toast ; another of hot barley short cake ; a plate of white and light wheat flour biscuit ; a bread tray full of rye and rye-and-Indian bread, with no less than three

kinds of loaf-cake, and a dish of doughnuts and crullers, formed the catalogue in the bread line. A dish of venison, some moose steaks, a squirrel pie, and some ham and eggs, were not all the meats, for a loin of cold roast veal stood upon a side table, and every guest in turn was urged to partake of every dish. Raspberry preserve, dried raspberry pie, raspberries stewed, were the fruits most in use, and very good they were, and earnestly the lady who presided, urged the party to "eat a little with some cream, just to try and make out a breakfast."

When all had eaten to a surfeit, at a sign from Howell, one of the girls sat a decanter of wine before Parson White, while the others cleared away the plates, and placed wine glasses "right side up" before each one. Parson White filled his glass, and passed the bottle to the next, with the remark, "Come, fill up bumpers, and we will drink health and a long life of connubial felicity to the bride and groom." Howell sat next, and of course filled up his own and one for his wife, and then passed it to his daughters, who followed suit—they did not know that they could do otherwise—they had never seen any one upon such an occasion refuse wine. The bottle came next in course to Dr. Field. Alida was watching him closely, almost trembling with anxiety; but he did not observe her, though every eye at the table did observe him as he turned his glass bottom up and passed the bottle to Blythe, who followed his example. The next was Alida, who had previously determined to refuse, even if she stood alone. She was not surprised at the act of Dr. Field—in fact, she expected

it, but she could not understand why Blythe—perhaps for the first time in his life—should pass the bottle. Nat sat next, at her left hand, and usage and common politeness required that she should hand him the wine, which would be an invitation, as much as though spoken, to drink with her. It was much against her inclination to do so, but she felt constrained to obey the tyranny of custom, rather than the monitor within. Nat had been so absorbed in his own unpleasant thoughts, that he had not noticed the turning of glasses. He had been thinking of the pledge he was required to give in drinking the proposed toast, to a vow that he did not mean to keep, and of the mental reservation he would make as he swallowed the potion. He took the bottle, and was about to fill his glass, when he observed that Alida's was empty, and reached out his hand to turn and fill it. She placed her hand on the glass to hold it in its reversed position. He then saw that the two next glasses were both upturned in the same way. He looked amazed, and put down the decanter without filling his own. Parson White was dumfounded. If one of his own members had "spoke out in meeting" the most heterodox doctrine, even if it had been an avowal of belief in universal salvation, he would not have been more surprised. To take wine at a wedding was part of his religion, for which he thought he had good example in the great head of the church. He never once reflected that Christ converted water into wine, not for the purpose of encouraging its excessive use, but to show those present his power to work miracles. Had no other intoxicating beverage ever been intro-

duced into use but such wine as that made by our Saviour at the wedding, it would not now be necessary for his followers to abstain from its use upon such occasions, "for conscience sake," because their example may lead to fatal results in creating a taste in some of the guests for intoxicating beverages. The wine of Gallilee was the pure juice of the luxurious grapes of that country, and as unlike the fashionable drink called by the same name at the present day, as the personage who made wine from water, is unlike him that "holds the bottle to his neighbor's lips."

"I do not understand it," said the old man ; "refuse to drink the health of the happy pair—I never saw the like—never heard of such a thing among friends." No doubt he spoke truly. I well remember when a couple would have thought themselves hardly respectably married without wine at the wedding ; and would have felt a refusal to drink their health as a slight, or perhaps an insult too great to be readily forgiven.

"We do not refuse," said Dr. Field, "to pledge ourselves with you in the wish for long life and happiness, and true faithful love to each other every day of the life which may be allotted to this couple. But, parson, we are sons and daughters of Rechab—*we drink no wine.*"

"Not even a little for the stomach's sake?"

"No ; but for the sake of our stomach, and all the other functions of mind and body, and particularly for conscience sake, that I may not lay a stumbling-block in the way of a brother, I shall abstain from wine."

"Oh, if that is it," said Howell, "we have anything else

you please. Elta, dear, bring the doctor anything else he will have from the bar. What shall it be, doctor?"

The doctor whispered a word in Elta's ear, and she went out smiling, saying as she went :

"You shall have it, doctor, as pure as ever flowed from the crystal fountain of the rocks of our own Green Mountains."

In a twinkling she was back, and placed by the doctor's right hand a cut glass decanter, so clear and transparent that it seemed empty, until he turned his glass and poured it full of the translucent liquid.

"If we may drink wine because Christ made it from water, how much more then should we drink the original, as it was made by Him who created both land and sea, and all the sweet waters of our mountain springs. I will pledge you in this glass, filled with a beverage made by God for the use of man, uncontaminated by any of the arts or contrivances of the devil, to win souls from the path that leads men to the pure waters of life."

As he finished, he passed the decanter to Blythe, saying as he did so, "in this we can drink joy to the wedded pair. Will you join me?"

"I will, with all my soul. And you, cousin?"

"Most gladly."

"And I," "and I," "and I," went round the table.

"Howell," said Parson White, "take off the wine, and give us all clean glasses. The doctor has preached us a better sermon than I ever preached in my life. Let us

make a profitable application. Here, in this best of all beverages, we will drink long life, health, and happiness to our young married friends."

"And success to the cause of cold water," added the doctor.

"Amen and amen. And now may God's blessing be with us all for ever. Now let us rise up, and go forth. Howell, let us have our horses."

Dr. Field whispered a word to Howell, and directly after, when Nat called for the bill, he was surprised to hear that it was paid, but by who, or why, he might as well inquire of the "know-nothings."

While the company were getting ready, Dr. Field took the opportunity to run over and see his little patient, and was delighted—but not half as much as the mother—to find that the medicine had produced a soothing effect, and brought out the disease handsomely, producing a gentle perspiration and quiet asleep. The mother could hardly express her gratitude sufficiently to satisfy herself. The doctor gave some further directions, and particularly for her to go or send to Howell's for any necessary for her own or the child's comfort, until she was quite recovered. As he went away she stood at the window of the little room looking after him, until she thought aloud.

"And this is one of our enemies—this is one of the people we are at war with—this is a fair specimen, so far as I have been able to see, of a nation whom our rulers would teach us to hate. God help me to teach my child to love

them ; and oh, may the time soon come when we may live among them, and be not only with them, but of them, as members of the same family."

And may the time soon come when all nations shall be at peace, and wars be no more.

The wedding cavalcade made quite an imposing appearance as it emerged from the woods on the brow of the hill that overlooked the valley—a valley which would have been as peaceful as it was pretty, if it had not been for the smoke of one fire that spread its black pall over the log cabin homes of its inhabitants.

It was full time that the missing part of the population had returned ; for a considerable commotion, and strange surmises were beginning to affect some of those left behind. Mrs. Blythe sat up working or rather kept on working, till so late an hour that she could not send to see why Alida did not return, and finally concluded that she had stopped at her uncle's, and they had persuaded her to stay all night. Consoling herself with this hope, she fell into a sort of uneasy slumber, from which she was awakened by a loud rapping at the door. Of course her first thought—for so runs a mother's thought—was that something had happened to Alida, and she started up in hurried alarm, to inquire what it was.

"Has he been here?" said the voice at the door.

"No—is she well—where is she?"

"Oh, she is well enough—at home at our house—but it is him—has he been here?"

"No, I have not seen him for a day or two."

The voice at the door came from Parson White's hired

man, and he was talking of him and the old lady, while Mrs. Blythe, was only thinking of Alida and Nat. Satisfied that she was at "our house," all safe, she went back to her bed, and slept sound till morning ; while the man went over to the deacon's to make the same inquiry, with the same success. He then thought that he would go down to the old still-house, and see if Blythe was there, and tell him that his father was missing. The man in attendance told him that "neither Blythe nor any of the boys, had been there that day—that Nat was there just at dark, and told him to see to things, for he should not be at home that night."

The man then went home, got a lantern and went out to the barn, and found the parson's mare, and Blythe's colt, both gone. The parson went off in such a hurry, or else expected to be back again so soon, that he forgot to tell anybody where he was going. Mrs. White spent a very uncomfortable night, and next morning, as her husband did not make his appearance before breakfast, she started the man out again to look all over the settlement. It was soon ascertained that Parson White was not the only one missing ; but whether they had gone to take Canada, or had themselves been taken by "the British," was not so clear. Somebody—that very knowing chap in all communities—somebody said that Dr. Field was about there last night, and of course then somebody else said that "no doubt they had all gone off on a smuggling expedition, together."

"What, Parson White !"

"Yes—why not the parson and his son ?—we all know how it is with the deacon and his son."

"Well, but Alida Blythe is missing too."

"No matter—she is one of the family. Perhaps she is out with the doctor again, watching Smuggler's Bridge. You can't always tell a bad egg till you break it."

"No, nor a good one before it is laid."

Such was the effect produced by this "mysterious disappearance," that before they came in sight as they emerged from the woods, nearly all the men women and children were on the *qui vive*, so that by the time of their arrival, they had an extemporaneous reception party, of a larger and more varied character, than usually falls to the lot of runaway matches.

Such was the joy at seeing all parties safely returned, that the widow forgot to scold her daughter for getting married, in a way so contrary to the formalities of society, in staid New England families; and the deacon consoled himself, and "sister Blythe," with the reflection and application, that as all matches are made in heaven, it was quite out of the question for weak mortals to oppose its will.

Mrs. White was quite happy to think it was no worse with her old man, but her greatest cause of happiness was still in store for her.

As the meeting of the lost party, and those about to start out in pursuit, took place near Deacon Brandon's, all hands were invited into the house, to "toast the new couple," a custom that has wrecked the happy prospects of many a wedded pair, upon the barren shores of the voyage of life, ending at the drunkard's home.

"Most willingly, upon one condition," said Parson

White, and that is, that you give us the same kind of liquor that we have already drunk for that purpose, and *no other*. Do you accept the terms?"

"Certainly. If I have it."

"Very well, remember ; I know you have it."

As it was neither breakfast nor dinner-time, the table was set out in the big room, loaded with a profusion of eatables, and decorated with decanters of rum, brandy, wine and whisky, the latter of his own manufacture, both new and old ; and then all hands were invited to walk up and help themselves.

"But first, Brother White, will you ask a blessing?"

"No, because you have not kept your word ; you promised that we should have only one sort of liquor."

"Well, I did not know which sort you would choose, and so I put all sorts before you ; now make your selection, and we will put all the rest away."

"Will you lock it in that closet, and give me the key?"

The deacon and some of the company began to think that the old parson had drank enough already, he was "so funny."

"Certainly I will. Which goes first?"

"This," said the parson, holding up the brandy, "is a fiery foreign liquor, only fit for compounding the doctor's tinctures ; to him I consign it ; as I have no doubt he knows how it came here, he will know how to get it away."

"If I had any hand in getting it over the line," said Dr. F., "I will take care that it never gets me under it. I shall label it 'poison,' only to be taken upon the advice of

the physician ; one who knows enough not to take his own medicine. It ranks among the poisonous drugs ; and thus I consign it to the deacon's medicine chest."

There was a roar of merriment at these sallies of wit ; both at the allusion of the parson to the fact of the brandy having been smuggled over the line by the doctor, and at his allusion to its power to get him under ; and the conversion of it into medicine, "to be only taken when well shaken."

"This," said the parson, taking up the rum, "is a hypocrite. It is soft and smooth to the taste, insinuating itself into the best of families, only to breed discord, misery, wretchedness, just as hypocrisy does everywhere."

"For which, I will consign it to solitary confinement in the guard-house," said the doctor, with a well understood look at Blythe.

"And this," taking up two black bottles of whisky, "is a home-made devil, but none the less a fiery one, and whether its parent was wheat, rye, corn, or potatoes, the child is a miserable bastard, deformed in body and wicked in soul ; it is an evil spirit from an accursed place, from which we derive no good. And since my eyes have been opened, as they have been this day, by the aid of this good physician, and this his learned student," putting his hand upon Alida's head, "may God ever bless her ; and this neophyte," taking Blythe by the hand, "may God protect him and keep him to his present resolution, never, to touch, taste, or handle the unclean thing ; but lest he may be corrupted of evil associations, and, as we all often are, tempted of the devil, if we allow him in our company, shut him up, doctor, shut him up

in a dark prison ; and would to heaven that we could chain him, and all his kith and kin, out of the sight of men, for a thousand years."

"And that all the blind eyes in our country could be made to see as you have," said the doctor, "and as they would if I could thus put the cause of their blindness out of sight."

Never in all the preaching of their old minister had those present heard such sermons before. At first, they thought it was only one of his common acts of facetia, but they began now to feel that he was in earnest, and intended to impress upon his auditors the first lesson in the right direction of temperance that he ever gave them ; notwithstanding he had always been crying out against the horrid sin of drunkenness, while he was as blind as a bat to the true cause of the dreadful disease. He had, as he said, "for the first time in his life, had his eyes opened that day, to see that one distillery in a neighborhood would harbor more devils than a dozen pious, good ministers could drive out, by constant exorcisms and exhortations against the sin, folly, and wickedness of indulging in the use of its products, to such a degree as to render the person who swallows such a deadly poison incapable of self-control of his appetite, until he finally falls below the level of a beast. He had never thought before how difficult, nay, utterly impossible, it is to draw the line between moderate drinking and drunkenness. Although not yet a teetotaler, he had resolved to give up his favorite mug of flip."

Having disposed of all the ardent spirits, the guests

generally thought that he had at last arrived at the "one kind of liquor," which he stipulated should alone be used to drink the new couple's health, and their happy reconciliation to their parents, after their clandestine marriage. Wine, of course, could not, they thought, be dispensed with at a wedding. They were mistaken.

"What is this?" said Parson White, taking up a decanter of sparkling old Madeira.

The deacon spoke up now quickly, as he was glad to turn the current that had been coursing through his mind for a few minutes to a more pleasant channel.

"That is pure old Madeira ; just such as we use upon our communion table."

"And there let it be used as an emblem of Him we worship. Here it cannot be drank to-day, for this is a cold-water wedding ; the first, it is true, that ever I officiated at, or witnessed, but I hope it may not be the last ; for as Dr. Field says, while the rich use wine, the poor will use rum, and the poorer use cheaper whisky ; and perhaps upon the very altar which should be consecrated to eternal affection, we plant the seed of dire disease, wretchedness and woe, to the wife and her offspring—perhaps to both parents and children."

Deacon Brandon had listened and laughed at his proscription of all the other liquors, but he had no idea of having his good old Madeira treated in the same way.

"What !" thought he, "not drink wine at my son's wedding !" It was an unheard of outrage upon good old orthodox custom. Besides, where was this kind of preaching

going to lead the flock? "What if all should conclude to drink nothing but cold water?" It was not to be tolerated—it was an infamous heterodox doctrine, calculated to take the bread out of his mouth; destructive to his dearest interests; something that he felt it his Christian duty to oppose. It would stop his distillery, and every other one, and deprive the people of a market for their produce. "Look at the thousands of dollars that I pay them to keep my distillery in operation," thought he, but he did not think of the thousands that they paid him for converting food into poison.

He therefore ventured to put in a plea for the wine, which, though not his own manufacture, was a legitimate product of the old still-house; for he had smuggled the whisky into Canada, and exchanged it for wine, and smuggled that back again. He had a ready salvo to his conscience for this, in the plea that wine must be had for communion service, and therefore he provided a little for that, and weddings, and any other purpose for which his neighbors would buy it at three hundred per cent. profit.

"But you will not send away the wine, Brother White; you know Christ approved of wine at weddings, and the good book says, 'take a little wine for the stomach sake.'"

"'And thine often infirmities,'" added the parson. "Yes, I know it, but it does not tell us to take it when we are well, until we create infirmities. The good book also says, 'wine is a mocker—it biteth like a serpent, it stingeth like an adder—men drink wine earned by their slanders—(smuggling," he added, in a whisper to Field, but the

deacon caught the word and bit his lip) ““their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps—they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. In the wine-cup of the hand of him who maketh men drunk, the wine is red—it is full of mixture—take it away—this is red—it giveth its color in the cup—it will make men drunk.’ Now give us the clear cold water, emblem of purity, God’s best gift to thirsty mortals, and we will drink joy, hope, love, happiness, and long life to our new married young friends; and woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and putteth the bottle to him, and maketh him drunken—for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty—and for the wickedness of making men drunk, thou shalt be laughed to scorn and held in derision—thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow—with the cup of astonishment and desolation.”

“Does he mean me?” thought Deacon Brandon. “I could strangle the old hypocrite, telling everybody else not to drink anything, while he will guzzle it down himself. I cannot hold in much longer.”

“Therefore,” continued the minister, “I will say to those who spend their substance for strong drink : Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Now hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Year after year had his auditors listened to his sermons, but never before to one like this. Unlike those of the Sabbath, this had no tendency to make any one drowsy ; but

never did Deacon Brandon, while striving to keep his eyes open, for appearance sake, feel half as anxious for the amen, as he did now. This new doctrine, this sudden conversion of his old pastor, did not suit him ; every word was a stab under the fifth rib ; every quotation from the Bible, and a good many other texts that these called to mind, went straight down into his conscience, and rankled there like the bitterness of wormwood. It was too much for his equanimity, adept as he was in all the arts of hypocrisy ; and when Parson White poured out his glass full of the pure spring water, and said : " Come, Deacon, let us drink the health of the young couple," he replied testily—" No, if I am not to be allowed to drink what I please in my own house, I won't drink at all. Boys, if you want to eat or drink any of that trash, you are welcome to, but if you don't, come along with me to the cellar kitchen, and let us see what we can find better ; it ain't all locked up in that closet."

Nearly half of the male portion of the company followed the Deacon, while several of those who remained, cast furtive glances at the closet, and then at Parson White's pocket, which held the key. It was too great an innovation upon the ancient custom of wine at a wedding, for them to bear with a good grace ; it was an encroachment upon the rights and privileges of every member of good society, and they predicted it was sowing seed which would produce a " thistle crop," and would not be submitted to, without a few murmurs of dissatisfaction. Several pious old ladies, " didn't see what had got into the minister, for their part they couldn't see any harm in a glass of wine."

Alida's eyes fairly sparkled with delight. Dr. Field pondered upon the influence that a single individual is capable of exerting for good, and thought, "what a lump a little leaven hath leavened." Blythe foresaw efficient aid to help him in his new resolution, for his mother never was more happy in her life. Mrs. Blythe tried to be cheerful, but to a close observer, it would have been evident that her soul was not in this marriage. She had opposed it as long as it was of any use to do so, and had now wisely determined to give it her approval ; yet a gloomy foreboding of evil hung upon her mind with the tenacity of the nightmare. Mrs. Brandon was one of that class of good pious souls, who think whatever the minister says and does is right, and therefore, she most heartily approved of the present disposition of the liquors ; and would have given an equal approval six hours afterwards if Parson White had called for his usual mug of flip. Nat looked ahead to a pecuniary object he had in view, and floated in the stream that carried him nearest to the port he was sailing for. In the meantime, as the loud laugh of those in the kitchen came up to his ear, he wished himself among those who had something besides cold water to wash down the cakes and pie, and make the heart glad—and the brain mad, he might have added.

As soon as Dr. Field had seen the experiment of a wedding without wine a successful operation, he reminded Blythe of the necessity of their absence, to accomplish the work laid out in the morning. Yes, this was a wedding without wine ; the first ever celebrated in that community ; and to some of those present it gave much satisfaction, but to a

majority, it was a new era for which they were not prepared; while to others it was "an interference with their dearest rights,"—"A mixing up of church matters with things that the parson had no business with,"—"The idea of prescribing what we shall drink upon such occasions"—and other similar expressions were whispered in the upper room, and talked out in full in the lower one; for there they had the countenance of Deacon Brandon, who declared that "things had come to a pretty pass, when he could not treat his neighbors, without the interference of such fellows as Dr. Field."

He meant Parson White, for in truth he alone had interfered, but he was too popular among the people—it would not answer to attack him, though he felt it in his heart.

It was the beginning of a feud in society which never healed. It was God and his minister, and such of the church as could listen to the advocates of temperance, as they depicted the evils of drinking, upon one side, and the devil and his distillers, and their disciples, upon the other side. For forty years it was a hard fight. The statute book of Vermont shows which finally conquered. The devil, distillers, disciples and whisky have all been cast out—religion and temperance reign triumphant. A wedding without wine, however rare in 1814, is not a thing to be wondered at in 1854.

CHAPTER IX.

Absence from home, and false excuses—Borrowing money and false securities—Another cattle-drove, and another trick of the smugglers—A false-hearted husband, gone never to return—How to borrow money—A long letter, which the reader will not wish a line shorter—Michael in his new home, and new capacity—More influence in the right direction—Rum banished through Michael's example, from another house—A long story of a short sleigh-ride on Lake Champlain—The white phantom—A race for life—Death wins—The shot—The scream, and death of the smugglers—The lost man on the ice—"Oh let me die, my wife and child have perished"—Magnetic communications through the night air—The arrival—The glowing kitchen fire—Old acquaintances—Wonder succeeds wonder—The P. S. of the letter, contains the nub of the story.

ABOUT two months after the wedding, Nat had, or pretended to have, business in Canada, and although he said it would not take him over a week, he remained away upwards of two months, and when he returned, his wife thought that he did not give a very good reason for his absence, or seem quite as much rejoiced to get back again as she could have desired. He told her, however, that he had met with such a chance for a speculation, if he only had the necessary amount of money. For the first time, he now hinted that he should like to have the disposal of Alida's inheritance, and with it he was sure to make a fortune.

"But you know," she said to him, "that we agreed to pay that to mother for the farm."

“Yes, but I can make another thousand with it, just as well as not, before I do that. You had better go with me next week, and we will get it, and as soon as I double it, I will pay the thousand over to her.”

He continued to press the matter so close, that after a few days parrying the subject, she at length had to tell him the fact of her paying it over, or rather transferring the certificates to her mother, and to her he would have to apply if he obtained it, as it was no longer under her control. A bitter curse was upon the very tip of his tongue, but his lips were compressed with passion, and his natural cunning came to his aid, and he replied :

“Oh, very well, that is all right. I suppose she has no use for it, and as the papers for the farm are not made out, she has the security in her own hands, and can let me have the money just as well as not.”

Mrs. Blythe, however, suggested “that Nat should get his father to become security, and then she would let him have it.” She did not believe that the old deacon would do it, as he was very close and careful about money matters. His father at this time was away, buying another drove of cattle, and as he had become so bitter against Field since his advocacy of temperance, he would not, as he did formerly, unite with him, and let him manage the whole business, by which they had made large sums of money, but determined to go alone, and, as will be seen, with just such a result as often falls to the lot of those who undertake a business they know nothing about. There was nothing for Nat to do then but to wait the deacon’s return from the

south, where he was buying his beeves, and for which he had mortgaged his farm and everything that he possessed in the world, so that the success or failure of that single enterprise, would make him rich or a bankrupt. If the widow Blythe had known this fact, she might have thought that Deacon Brandon's bond, as security for Nat, would not be quite as good as the money in bank. As winter had now set in, it was uncertain when his father would return. Nat took the opportunity to pay his Canada wife another visit ; telling Alida that it would perhaps be for his interest to remain till spring. He was very sorry to do it, but it was necessary, on account of that great speculation, to get the parties to wait until he could raise the money. He appeared so candid about it, that she really regretted having taken the advice of Dr. Field, and thus putting it out of her power to give him the money at once, and she was quite out of patience with her mother to think that she was so very particular. But Mrs. Blythe thought Nat had much better quit his speculations, and go to work ; and besides, she could not help observing that much as he professed to have quit drinking, it was profession only.

To Maria Louise, he said, whenever he left her to visit his other wife, that he had a good deal of unsettled business, and particularly a thousand dollars claim, that he had to watch very close, and even then feared that he would lose it. No doubt of that. He had reason to fear every leaf that stirred would expose his villainy, and then he most surely would lose that particular sum. It was, perhaps, through fear, that he remained so much of the time away. Soon

after he left the last time, his father had arrived with his cattle, and as usual, the whole drove had been stolen, and driven off to Canada ; but as the trick of putting them in pasture had been practised so often as to be a little stale, some other one had to be contrived ; so the drove was started off towards the Connecticut river, in charge of a United States "acting commissary" as he called himself, while publicly making the bargain, and giving drafts upon the treasury for the drove. The trick was cutely done, and the customs officers were also "done." They knew that Field and the deacon had fallen out, and did not suspect the latter. If the doctor had been engaged, no device would have prevented their suspicions, and they would have seized them upon the slightest grounds, upon a charge of intent to supply the enemy with provisions. Whether the drove went to the little garrison on the Connecticut river, or to a larger one in Canada, Deacon Brandon did not feel bound to inquire, and perhaps none of the customs officers would have taken that trouble, if the deacon had not been reported among the missing the next morning. They then took the cattle trail, and followed it about five miles on the road towards the river, where it turned into the woods, and at a short distance struck a path that led directly towards the line. It was too late to follow, but they determined to watch every movement of Nat and his father, or any one connected with them in any way, to see that the proceeds of the cattle should not come back in any tangible shape without a seizure. The absence of Scale Williams and John Longwood, and Nat's frequent and prolonged visits to Canada,

and this last operation were all supposed to be connected, particularly as Nat talked about what a speculation he was going to make, which the government party, as they were called, fully believed meant a big dash at smuggling, before peace, which began to be talked about. Everybody said, and Alida had no doubt of the fact, that Nat's absence had something to do with this last great cattle smuggle. It was this belief that made her rest so easy. She had no suspicions of the true cause of his long, long absence. The snow was almost gone when he returned ; but then he was "so glad to see her," that that made some amends. His father had just left home when Nat returned, and he followed him into Canada, as he told Alida and Mrs. Blythe, to get the old man's signature to the necessary papers, to enable him to get the money. He returned this time sooner than usual, with the proper documents regularly executed, with witnesses to his father's signature, to which he added his own, which he gave to Mrs. Blythe, and received the certificates of deposit, and hurried away to the bank to get the money. He borrowed money enough of Mrs. Blythe to bear his expenses, alleging as a reason that he expected to get it of his father, but as he met him on the road, and was in such a hurry, he never thought of it. Perhaps he thought borrowing his best horse without leave, was as much as he could afford to borrow of him.

This journey would necessarily take him a week or ten days, and then he said, after making one more trip into Canada, he was going to settle down, and go to farming. So he had told Marie Louise, that as soon as he got this

money, he would buy a farm and be steady. He was unusually affectionate in his farewell to Alida, and left her full of confidence that he had quite reformed, and was going to make one of the very best of husbands, and would very soon be still more dear to her, because he would then be a father.

The day after he started, Dr. Field came up, and almost the first word was an inquiry if Nat had gone to the bank.

"Yes, who told you?"

"Nobody; I dreamed it; and that is not all, that he never came back."

"Oh nonsense; why doctor, you don't know how Nat has changed lately. The only fault I have with him, is that he is away a little too much, but he says that he is going to stay at home all the time after he gets through with this speculation."

The doctor merely said, "I hope so," and Mrs. Blythe repeated it; but she could not help thinking that he had been for months intent upon this money, and that the speculation had been waiting for him all that time.

"However," said she in a tone of satisfaction, "I took good care to have his father's name as security, before I gave up the papers, notwithstanding Alida thought I was so very particular."

"Well, well, responded the doctor. I hope it will all turn out well yet; we will not cry till we are hurt." Then addressing Alida, to change the subject, he said:

"How does the whisky war come on in the valley?"

"Oh you may well say war; for the cold water party,

and the whisky party, are quite unlike the liquids—they will not mix at all. It is hard to tell which will finally keep on the surface. Uncle White and Blythe, are the champions on one side, and Deacon Brandon, and Ned Smith, and Whisky Jake, as you know we always called Jacob Oldenheimer, are the great guns of the old distillery. The women are about equally divided. All that have drunken husbands, fight for their right to get drunk, and talk of the great benefit it is to farmers to have a distillery in the neighborhood. Isn't it strange, doctor? Oh, I forgot to tell you, I have heard from Michael. Such a pretty letter. He says, remember me to that dear good friend, Dr. Field."

"So have I heard from him. There, read that letter from my brother. It is written by one of the girls, who acts as his amanuensis.

"DEAR BROTHER WILL:

"I have been anxious to write to you for months, but as my eyes still remain in the same condition, I could not write without an amanuensis, and singular as it may seem, although I had two as good ones as I could desire, I could not use them—they were interested in what I wanted to say to you. But now Elithura is writing for me, and I can speak out. I have long been anxious to thank you most sincerely for that perfect treasure you sent me, who has become so important to me that I really do not know what I should do without him. Of course you know I mean Michael. He writes all my letters, not from dictation, for I have only to tell him the subject, and he composes better than I could myself. He keeps all my accounts, in short, he is scribe, clerk, book-keeper, cashier, and salesman; and that is not all; he is one of the best boys to work I ever saw. And then on Sunday, we enjoy a real treat. You know how fond I am of a good pair of

horses, but after my eyes got so bad, the girls were afraid to ride after my driving, and the less I drove, the more difficult it became, the bays were so restive, and for some weeks before Michael's arrival we had not been out to meeting, which is six miles off—just a nice morning ride. Almost one of the first things I inquired of him was, 'if he could drive a pair of horses.' He said 'he could try,' without giving much encouragement ; but Jef. May, who came over with him, said, ' never fear ; he will have the bays, in a week, so they will play like kittens, or follow him like well broke pointers. I never saw such a boy with a horse.' And you may believe it, every word proved true. And now the girls feel just as safe, as though in a rocking chair at home, while Michael has the reins. And such sleigh rides as we have had this winter—I almost felt as well satisfied as though I held the reins myself.

"In the house he is always reading or writing, or holding 'winter evening amusements,' as the girls call them, in which mutual instruction is blended, and they say, more than they can get at school.

"I often wonder if it is possible that this boy could have been the poor neglected orphan that he says he was, kicked and cuffed about the world, uncared for, until that blessed good girl took him in hand. Scarcely a day passes that he does not express his gratitude to her and to you, and asks me to remember you both in my prayers. By the way, that reminds me of another thing he does.

"After my misfortune, it fell to the lot of Wilma to read a chapter for our family worship. She is a pretty good reader, but being engaged one morning, she asked Michael if he would read for father. He did so, and ever since I have been unable to get her to touch the book in his presence. I have never heard a better reader, and he reads the Scriptures so impressively, that his auditors often find a tear trickling down their cheek.

"To the girls he is more like a brother than anything else—except one thing to one of them—says my mischievous amanuensis—your little black-eyed Elithura ; I won't tell which, just to plague her, so

you may think it is her. However, I think that the trio would all shed tears if they thought he was going away. 'I think,' says Thura, 'that father would be the biggest baby in the house, at such a time.' I own I should feel bad.

"Michael has told us so many horrid stories about that old distillery, that he has made converts of us all to the temperance cause. We have quit using or keeping liquor in the house. Is that not something worth telling of? Although I am not much disposed to look into any one's pedigree, yet for Wilma's sake, I do feel a little anxious to know whether there is anything but poverty and neglect connected with Michael's birth or early days. He says his father was a good man before he got to drinking, but both his parents died so early that he knows nothing about them, or any relation upon either side, in the wide, wide world. If you know any reason against his becoming more closely connected with us, pray tell me before it is too late, for I am satisfied there is a tender spot in Wilma's heart, which a year or two may render incurable.

"How I should rejoice to have you pay us a visit, though, if you should, I don't know but Michael would go crazy; I am almost sure he would if he could see you and Alida both. Shall we ever have that pleasure? I am so much interested in that dear good girl, for her kindness to this poor neglected boy, that I am delighted to hear, from her letters to Michael, that her marriage has turned out so much better than I anticipated, from what he had told me of the habits of Nat Brandon. I was afraid that old distillery had ruined him, but I see by her last letter, that the blessed influence of a good wife is doing its good work.

"Thura says: 'Oh, father, do tell Uncle Will about the soldier.'

"As it is a curious story, and one in which your protégé acted a part, and one which brought us to a knowledge of some more of your good deeds, I will gratify her, though I fear we shall make it a long letter.

"One of the coldest days and nights in December, Michael had

been across the lake on the ice, with the double sleigh, to take over a couple of U. S. officers, from whom we learned, by the by, that peace was almost certain to be declared, as it was in a short time afterwards. They paid him liberally for the trip, and urged him to stay all night, as it was expected he would do when he left home. They were so unwilling for him to run the risk of going back that evening, that they even offered him a present of five dollars to remain. But no, nothing could induce him to wait till morning. 'I felt,' said he, 'that I must go back that night. There was an irresistible influence upon my mind, that something important demanded my return, or that something very important was about to happen—perhaps the house on fire—in which I should be instrumental in saving human life. I could not account for it. I fancied that the house, or family, or something connected with them, were in danger, and that I might be the means of doing some important service. If it had been twenty degrees colder, I would have braved it, so strong was the impression upon my mind.'

"By what method of reasoning, brother Will, as you have thought more upon such things than I have, do you account for these strange influences? However, you have not yet learned the results.

"It was about nine o'clock when he started from the other side. In vain the officers urged him to take a drink to keep out the cold, 'and,' added the landlord, 'to keep yourself out of the air-holes in the ice.'

"The very thing,' rejoined Michael, 'that would plunge me into danger from both causes.'

"He had been on the ice about two hours, and had made about two-thirds of the thirty miles safely, and without suffering, as he was well wrapped up, or seeing or hearing anything to break the monotony of a cold winter night upon Lake Champlain, when he caught sight, or fancied that he did, of a moving mass coming down the lake from the north. He stopped the horses, and the merry jingle of his bells, to listen. There was no merry answer of bells in

return, but there was evidently a sleigh gliding rapidly over the ice, which was coated with a slight covering of snow, without visible path, the travellers having to steer by the stars. The horses and sleigh of the strangers were all as white as the snow—even the leather of the harness, and the blankets in the sleigh were all white, so as to be as nearly invisible as possible ; but the breath of the horses had blown back and coated everything with frost, like a sparkling of diamonds, and as the motion shook them in the star-light, the crystals flashed and sparkled so that he could trace the course of the sleigh distinctly, and saw that it was aiming for the same landing that he was, and though the course of the white phantom was diagonal to his own, the two routes would soon intersect—perhaps about a mile ahead, as it was driven furiously, if by mortals, in a race for life, and if by spirits, with the speed of such ærial messengers.

“Michael understood in a moment—for it seems he has had some experience—that this was a thing of earth, and not of air, or a phantom of a night dream—the white sleigh was a smuggler. He guessed the cause of their haste at once. In all probability those who were driving had seen and heard him long before he saw them, and were suspicious he might belong to the custom-house service, and so they were straining every nerve to reach the shore first. They could have borne off to the right, and struck into the woods, but the ice all along the north shore under cover of the trees, after a few days’ sunshine, is very treacherous, and thus they were compelled to steer for a headland, the same that Michael was aiming for, for there was a good landing and a road. There is a little danger at all times of air-holes in the ice, and, as you know, accidents are very common on the lake in winter ; but who thinks of danger in a steeple chase? Michael’s horses saw the others, and snuffed, and pawed, and neighed, impatient to be off. The truth is, horses and driver, as their master would have been, were both in for a race, and danger of air-holes or anything else but little thought of in the excitement of the moment. The course of the smugglers soon brought them directly in a line

ahead of Michael, and then the race must have been intensely exciting.

“‘I have read,’ said he, ‘of flying machines—none ever equalled mine. I forgot that the thermometer ranged away down below zero, while I stood up in the sleigh, though it was difficult to hold my breath, and still more to hold my flying steeds. The chase had a fleet pair of horses, which reminded me of the tales I had read of the white Arabian coursers upon the désert. But theirs had had a longer run than mine, and I gained upon them rapidly, in spite of their utmost exertions. I knew how much dearer than life the smuggler values his load, for one is often risked in this trade to save the other ; and I knew, too, how much they were alarmed, and I felt a little mischievous, and in anticipation enjoyed their surprise, when they found how they had run from such a harmless enemy.

“‘The ice in-shore was clear of snow and glare, and smooth as glass. Here I gained on them still more rapidly, as my horses were sharp, and felt sure of every step, while theirs seemed afraid to press forward. As I came within hail, I gave a yell, varying the tone so it sounded like three or four different voices. I little expected such an answer as came back to my salutation ; though I knew some of the smugglers were diabolical scoundrels. I saw two men standing up in the sleigh—then a flash, and two balls whistled, I thought, within an inch of my head. The sudden and unexpected report, confused me for a moment, and the flash and smoke blinded my view ; it was but an instant, but before it cleared away, I heard a scream—‘Oh ! such a scream—I knew that part of it came from a woman’s voice ; the voice of alarm, terror, and despair ; and I gave the reins a pull to the right, that sent me like an arrow past the white sleigh—horses and drivers had all disappeared beneath the ice—they had fallen into an air hole—the two men who had just discharged their guns at me, having by that lost command of themselves and the reins, pitched headlong over the front of the sleigh, which was going at such speed that it shot over men and horses, as it broke loose, pressing them

under the edge of the narrow hole, which was barely large enough to let the horses under, while the sleigh shot ahead, with scarcely impeded force.

“What an escape from the same death-trap I had made; as it was directly in the line of my course. The two men had no time to utter a word, after their murderous attempt upon my life, before they were in eternity. The screams came not from them, but from a man, woman and little girl, who were passengers in the sleigh, or rather on top of the load, as it was full of bales of the most valuable goods. The concussion pitched them headlong out upon the ice, with a projectile force which sent them spinning away over the glare surface, like boys upon their sleds at the foot of a steep hill. It was a frightful shock, to be waked suddenly from their dreams of perishing in the cold, by the sound of fire-arms, and thus to be projected out upon the ice as though by the force of the explosion.

“It appears to me that I must have passed them nearly a mile, before I could check up, the ice was so smooth that with the least attempt to turn I should have capsized. When at last I succeeded, and returned toward the wreck, I found the woman and child but little hurt, though terribly benumbed with cold, yet not half as bad as before the accident; the woman said, that had warmed them. Her husband, she thought, had gone under with the others, but she was unwilling to leave the spot, though she might be in danger of perishing herself, if we remained. I told her to get in the sleigh with the little girl, and I would drive to a house. The child said, “Oh no, not without father.” So I told them to nestle down in the bottom of the sleigh, warm and comfortable as possible, and I would give a thorough search. I fastened the horses to the wrecked sleigh, and then began looking about. Several things that were on the load were scattered to leeward, and I went to all of them, looking for her lost husband. Then I got down on the ice and looked along the surface, still farther off—it does seem a quarter of a mile—there I saw a dark object, and I thought, I heard a groan. I ran to the spot, and there was a man.

He had on a soldier's oil-cloth watch-coat, and that upon the smooth ice had carried the wearer, who was completely stunned by the fall, away as though he had been mounted on steel-shod runners. He was just coming to his senses as I reached him and lifted him in my arms.

"'No, no, no, lay me down, let me die. I don't want to live, my poor wife, and sweet child. Oh, what a death! I have murdered them.'

"'No, they are both safe—both unhurt—come with me, and you shall see them, and I will take you all safe home with me. It is you that are hurt.

"'I found that he could not walk, and told him to sit still until I could bring the sleigh. I think I never went over an equal space so quick before. Something seemed to lift me up, and send me onward. I reached the horses' heads, and was untying them—eyes were watching me, and a voice said, 'Oh, you will not leave him!'

"'No, he is safe, and not much hurt—I will drive to him and in one minute you shall be with him.

"'Oh, is he alive? Thank God, how merciful!'

"'An hour afterwards,' said Michael, wiping away a tear, 'I was safe at home, with my passengers, rescued from almost certain death. You know the rest!'

"It is a curious story, is it not, my dear brother? but you have not yet heard half of the most curious part. 'The rest,' is the most interesting; that I will relate in my own language. More than an hour after we had gone to bed, and two hours before Michael's arrival, Wilma got up and called the hired-man, and made him pile on logs for a rousing fire in the kitchen. As she went back to her room, I called to her to know what it meant. She said 'that she was sure that Michael was coming home, and he would be almost perished with the cold.' I laughed at her, and wanted to know why she thought he would do such an imprudent thing, such a night as that. She could not tell why, but she said, 'she had heard the bells all the time; heard them when he came down the hill to the lake; and then as he came

over the ice, and lately as though he was running for his life—she was sure he was freezing.’ I told her she had been dreaming, but she declared ‘she had not been asleep ; but asleep or awake, I should find that she dreamed truly.’ So I did.

“Can you, my brother, upon any reasonable ground, account for those strange effects upon the human mind. What could have prompted her to provide this welcome fire for those distressed fellow creatures? By what possible medium was every sound of Michael’s movements conveyed to her ear. All the first moderate drive—the chase—the stop—the silence—the onward movement—the gentle tinkle of the bells, as he came up the mountain-road five miles off, came to her ear just as vividly as did the noisy rattle of his hurried drive into the yard, as he came close up to the kitchen-door, where he called so earnestly for John, ‘John, quick, John, for your life.’

“He had hardly spoken the word before I heard Wilma’s voice at John’s door, repeating the words——

“‘John, John, do get up, quick, that is a good fellow, Michael is at the door and wants help ; I am afraid he is frozen.’ And then she bounded over to my room, and came and put her hand on me gently to see if I was asleep.

“‘What is it, daughter, I am awake?’

“‘Oh father, Michael has come.’

“‘I know it dear, but what of it? He only wants John to take the horses ; he is well enough, I know, by his clear voice.’

“‘I don’t know, sir, but I know by his driving up so close to the door, and by the way he called John, that something is the matter.’

“There was something in this, and I sprung out of bed and began dressing myself. By this time John was at the sleigh, and Michael said something, and John replied, ‘Oh heavens. I thought I heard a groan ;’ and then Wilma said ; ‘Oh, dear, what is that?’ It was not the groan that made her say ‘What is that?’ ‘It was a child’s voice, as it entered the kitchen, exclaiming with delight,

“‘Oh father—mother—what a blessed good fire!’

“Wilma said, ‘it is somebody that Michael has found in distress—perhaps frozen.’

“‘Then,’ I said, ‘don’t let John bring them near the fire ;’ and away she ran faster than I could follow. By this time everybody in the house was up. You know who—no, what, we found in the kitchen. The man was not frozen, but almost chilled to death by laying so long on the ice, and somewhat bruised, but nothing serious. His wife was not hurt, but dreadfully alarmed about her husband, for whom she has a glowing affection. She had suffered with the cold very severely, but had somewhat recovered under Michael’s buffalo-skins. The little girl—one of the most beautiful, bright-eyed, little creatures I ever saw, with a profusion of dark hair in natural ringlets, as soon as she could divest herself of her wrappers, which her parents had robbed themselves of to keep her warm, ran to her father, and putting her arms around his neck, kissed him and said, ‘Oh, papa, we are among good Yankee folks now, and you are safe.’

“‘The truth flashed upon me—he was a deserter from the British army. He was none the less welcome. Directly the girls had a mug of red-pepper-tea, and then some coffee, and something to eat, and we had the satisfaction of seeing our guests quite revived, comfortable and happy as could be expected after such a narrow escape from death. Michael had not yet told us anything, except that he found them perishing on the ice ; that was enough for us ; while he was overjoyed to think he had been the means of saving such precious lives.’

“It was now so near morning, all seemed to enjoy the glow of our great fire of beech-wood logs, burnt to bright coals on the outside, to which every now and then John added a stick of dry hemlock, that they preferred to remain where they were until daylight. Michael said to John that they must start for the lake, to bring up the broken sleigh, as soon as they could see. This called for an explanation, when we had all the particulars which I have given to you. The soldier added that they were passengers, and that he had given a very

high price for the ride, being determined to get off, or perish in the attempt, as where he was, his wife suffered a daily danger more dreaded than death—too terrible to bear any longer; and he expected that if he had not escaped the night he did, that he would have been sent the next morning on a distant service on purpose to get him out of the seducer's way.

“ ‘And now, here we are, with nothing but the clothes we have on; but we have both of us strong willing hands, and we both know how to work. I have not always been a soldier—I only enlisted to get over to America, because I was too poor to pay for a passage; but if I live, I will not always be so, that is, if I can get anything to do to begin with.’

“ ‘You shall have it, and food, and shelter for your wife and child, as good as I have.’

“As I said this, the little girl slipped down out of her mother's lap, and came over by me, and looked up in my face as though she was trying to trace out some feature of an old acquaintance. Her mother said;

“ ‘Why, Georgiana, don't do so; what is the matter of the child?’

“ ‘His voice is like him, and he looks like him, but, mamma, it ain't Dr. Field, is it?’

“ ‘No, my child,’ said I, as I caught her in my arms, ‘but it is his brother, and if Dr. Field loves you, I will love you too.’

“How she did cling her arms around my neck and kiss me, and what a commotion there was in our fireside circle, and what mutual explanations.

“Yes, Will, it was your little patient of the Stanstead barracks, and her truly grateful parents, and, as they have proved, as honest, industrious a couple as ever lived. True, they will not always be poor.

“Georgiana is the pet of the house, the school, and all the neighbors. They will all live with us through the summer, and then, if he likes he can rent a farm, and before many years he will have one of his

own. I hope this will be an additional inducement for you to visit us in the course of the year.

"But I have not yet done telling you of the wonders of this wonderful night. I inquired who their companions were, who met such a sudden fate, even before they knew whether their murderous fire had taken effect upon the object they aimed at, and whether they were the owners of the load.

" 'No, they were a couple of rather dissolute young men, hired to drive the sleigh, and were to have a hundred dollars if they got safe through. It was for that they risked their souls, when they sped those balls to stop the officer, as they thought, in pursuit of them.'

" 'Did you know their names?'

" 'One of them I got very well acquainted with, because he was the son of a family in good standing, I knew in England. He was sent over by his father because he was so indolent, and unsteady at home. His name was Longwood. His companion, I never heard of by any but his given name, that was Scale.'

" 'Scale Williams and John Longwood!' exclaimed Michael. 'Poor old Zep Tharp—two of thy murderers have gone to their long home, where they will meet their victim, and hear his accusations against them for murder.'

" 'What singular developments, and still more singular connection of yourself with all those characters of a singularly tragic drama—and what real mysterious circumstances connected with Michael, and the irresistible influence that made him undertake that night drive, through which, perhaps those two met their fate, and these three were saved.'

" 'John and Michael went down in the morning and brought up the load of smuggled goods from the ice, which were given up to the customs officers, and found to be very valuable. There is a feeling among all parties, that Michael and George Yorkbridge—that is the soldier's name—should not only have the usual share, but the whole of the government portion also, and I have no doubt if those who have the

matter in charge can bring it about, that will be the final disposition of the property. Of course the right owner will not appear to claim it.

"There, now I hope you are satisfied with the length of this letter and will not complain of its being too short."

"No, nor too long either," exclaimed Alida, as she finished and began to fold it up, when she caught sight of a P. S.

"Well, now I declare ; never say anything of a woman's postscripts, if this letter has one."

"Read it," said the doctor, "for, what is unusual with postscripts, this is the most interesting portion of the whole epistle."

"It is hardly possible that anything can be more interesting than what we have read. But I will see."

"P. S. I open my long letter, to add a postscript, just to plague you, as I know they are your particular aversion, and, as you say, never contain any sense. You will, I hope, exempt this. I have just received a letter from my trusty agent, which says that the whole of that load of goods had been sold at auction, 'according to law,' for the benefit of the treasury of the United States, less the proper fees, for the round sum of two hundred dollars, and that Michael Granly, and George Yorkbridge, are the joint purchasers. Thus the ownership has been legally transferred, the law and officers satisfied, the public gratified, and Uncle Sam's treasury only about twenty thousand dollars poorer.

"Now I hope you will not say again, you never saw a postscript with any sense or information in it."

"No, I never will ; or that family letters are always full of insipid nonsense."

CHAPTER X.

Very short, but full of fire—Continuation of events—Another family letter without a postscript—The birth of the real heroine of the story—Life begun in sorrow—How will it end?—A happy marriage—And another in prospect—Picture of a Green Mountain thunder-storm—Lightning, and where it strikes—A night long to be remembered—The beauty of a fire scene—What it burnt is not regretted—Smouldering ruins and ruined hopes.

THE continuation of the chain of events connected with my story, I find already to my hand, in the copy of a letter furnished me by one of the family of a principal character in this life drama. It was written about three months after the interview I have just spoken of with Alida, in answer to one of inquiry from Michael to Dr. Field.

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND :

“You ask me, ‘what in the world has become of Alida, that I can get no answer to a letter, or hear whether she is dead or alive? Has anything happened? Pray tell me all the news.’

“You ask me too much, unless I should write as long a letter as my brother—or rather Elithura—did to me about your wonderful night-drive across Lake Champlain. ‘Has anything happened?’ Yes, a great deal more than we had

a right to expect. It is no wonder that Alida has not answered your letter, for since the date of the last one written to you, after reading yours and the one I alluded to above, she has met with joys and sorrows enough to crush a stronger heart than hers. Joy at becoming the mother of a sweet little girl, and bitter sorrow at feeling that she is deserted by the father of that child ; forsaken by a husband whom she loved with a most holy affection ; robbed by one who had sworn to support, nourish, and protect her through life.

“ Do you recollect what you said to me at our first conversation about Nat and Alida ? that he had no love for her, but only wanted to get hold of the money coming to her, and how I chided you for such an uncharitable thought ? You were right, and I was wrong. But it was owing to your remark that I induced her to put all she had into the hands of her mother before she was married, though I had no thought at the time that he would appropriate it dishonestly ; but in that I was mistaken.

“ Some months ago he persuaded Mrs. Blythe to let him have the money, as he had an opportunity, he said, with it to make a great speculation ; hinting that some person in Canada had a valuable lot of goods that he was afraid to run himself, and would therefore sell at less than English cost. Mrs. Blythe refused to give up the certificate of deposit, unless Nat's father would sign the note with him for the payment ; alleging that smuggling was such a precarious business, that although some folks had made a great deal of money, others had lost, and she was unwilling

to run any risk. At that very time, the old deacon was over the line looking after a drove of cattle—you know how they got there—and Nat went after him to get his signature to the bond, and then came back and started for Connecticut to get the money, and never has been seen or heard from since. Yes, he was heard from once, though his wife would not believe the story.

“ Jason Inwright, you know what an odd animal he is, went to Montreal some three or four weeks after Nat went away, and somewhere on the journey got acquainted with a Frenchman, who told him Nat married his daughter only a few days before the date of his marriage to Alida, and gave all the circumstances so minutely that there can be no doubt of the fact ; and still further, that he had come for his wife just before Jason saw him, and moved her away into York State, somewhere west of lake Champlain ; and further, that he had plenty of money. It seems that the Frenchman was drinking at the time, and, as a matter of course, Jason was in the same plight, and so he did not learn any further particulars, as to his name or where he lived, or where Nat had gone. As for my part, I have no doubt of the truth of the story, but poor Alida cannot believe him such a heartless villain, and she sits and presses her babe to her breast, telling it to be a good child, and papa will come by and by, to see his little darling ; but her friends have lost all hope, have given up all expectation of ever seeing him again, for it seems that besides all his other villainy, he forged the name of his father to the note he gave Mrs. Blythe.

“‘But,’ I hear you exclaim, ‘the deacon will pay it—he will not let the widow lose it.’

“Perhaps he would have done so, but for one trifling little circumstance, and also the five hundred dollars that Nat owed me, for which I had his father’s name, which was not forged ; and that circumstance is, that the deacon has lost every dollar he was worth in the world, and all that he could borrow, involving several of his neighbors in his own ruin, including the widow Blythe. He borrowed money and mortgaged his farm to buy cattle, and sold them for cash at a great profit, but was not content with that. So he went into partnership with a Boston sharper, and bought goods which his partner was to take charge of, to run into that market. This he accomplished with about one half, and the other half got ‘picked up,’ by the ‘sharks.’ Still they would have saved themselves, but just then came the declaration of peace, and their goods sold at more than ten thousand dollars loss ; and all the receipts were pocketed by the Boston partner, for his half of the capital, which it seems he had stipulated should be paid back out of the first sale ; leaving the deacon, not only with his debts here, but a very heavy one on the purchase in Canada.

“And this is not the worst of it. It seems that Blythe in his lifetime mortgaged his land to Deacon Brandon, but before his death, from money from his mother’s estate, had paid it all up. However, the deacon had assigned the mortgage to Jake Oldenheimer, and owing to Blythe’s habits in the latter part of his life, and his sudden death, that mortgage had never been taken up. The deacon wanted to

use the money, and Jake knowing it was secure, let it run on, although he knew that Blythe had paid it to the deacon. So you see, not only the money, but house, home, husband, and all, are swallowed up in the same vortex of ruin. There is no hope of mercy from Jake ; his very bitterness against what he deems his enemies, because they do not countenance his drunken habits, will prompt him to foreclose the mortgage, and turn the widows and orphans out of doors ; and he has the law upon his side.

“ Poor Alida ! how her prospects are blighted ! How sad a mistake I did make, that I did not follow the prompting of some unseen spirit, which moved me to prevent that marriage, at the very moment of its consummation.

“ But I will make all the amends in my power—she shall never want a home while I have one, though she can never have a happy one again. Her cup is turned to bitterness, and her marriage bed to one of thorns.

“ I have a little news, however, for you, of a more pleasing nature.

“ Frank May is married to Mary Tharp, and Frank May’s mother thinks there is not such another woman on earth. It is a question if she does not love her better than she does Frank. Mary’s father remains true to his promise, and is getting along finely, and so is Zep’s widow and daughter. They all live together, happy, comfortable, contented, and respected by all who know them. Decker is as great a sot as ever.

“ Blythe White is a glorious fellow. He is almost in love with my pretty niece Elithura, from your vivid description.

It would be funny if he should go over to see her, and get up a match.

"I am writing this letter at Parson White's—we have just attended family prayers, and among all the other things prayed for by the old parson—that queer compound of religion and oddity—was this : ' that if God should take it into his head to strike Deacon Brandon's distillery with lightning, that he would do it now, while it was full of whisky.' I suppose he was reminded to put in this petition by some of the most vivid flashes that I ever witnessed, except once in the mountains near Montpelier, when I counted more than fifty successive streams of fluid, passing down upon the bare rocky peak, of one of the highest points. It seemed as though the fire came down in solid masses, and as it fell upon the rock, split in pieces, and rolled down the sides, while the thunder not only rolled over head, but actually seemed to crash down through the rocks and trees away below where I stood. In fact, I was above the heaviest part of the shower ; I was on a level with the clouds, and compassed about with fire. To-night it is all over-head, but the flashes come in quick succession, lighting up the valley so that I can count every house as plainly as I could at mid-day. There ! just now there was a flash, that seemed to rest for half a minute upon a spot which must be ever dear in your memory—that sweet place by the big rock, where you took your final leave of Alida. What would I give to restore her to the bliss of that moment ? Then, her pathway in life was as bright as this flash that has just passed, leaving all nature ten times darker for its

vivid light. In the midst of all this terrible darkness, there is one light, sending up its smoke, and glare, and sparks, upon the night air, and they rise up towards the black clouds as if to covet connection with their electric fire, for there is not a breath of wind to waft them away.

“ You will guess that this is the fire of the old distillery. Yes, it burns on, and for aught that I can see, will burn on, consuming this sweet vale like a pestilence ; it is worse than ever, since it has fallen into the hands of its new owner, Jake Oldenheimer.”

“ Heavens ! what a peal and flash, all blended in one. I am blinded. I could not tell which came first. And now, Oh, how intensely dark. And now what a bright light flashes out upon the darkness again. What can it be ? for this is not from the clouds. It comes from the earth. What can it be ? Ha, ha, I see. We are avenged at last. The lightning and the old distillery fire have met. Yes, yes, it must be so. How sudden ; for while I have written these few words the flame has sprung up through the floors, and along the posts, illuminating every window, and now it is out of the roof. Fire ! fire ! fire ! now rings out upon the stillness, for the thunder having done its work—having spent its power in that last peal—has rolled away to the mountains, and the lightning has hid itself in the clouds, while the dry boards and shingles of that old building, and the two hundred barrels of liquid lightning stored in its loft, send a more vivid, enduring light up to the very clouds, than their own electric flashes. Even the rain which had just began to patter its music upon the roof, lulling the tired laborer to

sleep, has suddenly dried up, that no drop should hinder the burning of that old black roof, and all beneath."

"There goes the bell upon the little church, to waken all the sleepers around, till they shall hear the cry of, Fire ! fire ! fire ! and come out, to look upon the magnificent spectacle. The whole building is already one sheet of flame. I never saw anything so sudden. The bolt must have fallen upon a cask of fiery fluid, and burst it at the same time it ignited, and that has burst others, and now all is a sea of billowy, rolling, surging flame, sending its forked tongues an hundred feet up, towards the home of Him who kindled the fire. Now the great wood-shed has taken fire, and a thousand cords of dry hemlock wood, will add a mass of fire, hot enough to melt the rocks of our own Green Mountains into glass. I have often seen the terrific fires that roar up the mountain sides, where the trees have been winrowed, but I have never looked upon so grand a sight as this. Perhaps it is because all else around is so intensely dark, that the flame glares out over the whole valley in such vivid brightness. In every house it is as light as day. I have put out my candle, and sit here a mile away from the fire, writing by the light of that burning building. Everybody is out looking upon this midnight illumination, but no one lifts a hand or voice to save, for all are powerless. Those who regret to see it burn, are awe-struck, and exclaim, 'it is the hand of God !'

"In an hour from now, not a stick will remain above the surface of the ground where once stood that pest of this valley—Deacon Brandon's old Distillery."

“Now the clouds, as if satisfied with what they have accomplished, are rolling away over the line, and the stars begin to peep out, smiling at what the fire of heaven has been about while they were veiled in darkness—smiling to think—if stars can think—that a foul spot has been purified, as all foul spots can best be purified—by fire.

“Now Blythe is calling, ‘Come, doctor, it won’t rain, let’s go down :’ so, my dear boy, good-night. Give my love to all my sweet cousins, and believe me as ever, your friend.

“WILL FIELD.”

CHAPTER XI.

The cycle of years, and the change, and new features it has brought in our story—

An age of new life to one, and blasted hope to another—The great want of an affectionate nature—Marry again, never—The widow finds a home—Alida and Celestine start upon a long journey, and arrive at—disappointment—A sad parting of friends—The end of the journey, and then—What then?

SEVEN years ! What changes have been wrought in one septennial cycle. Seven years from the date of Dr. Field's letter describing the scene of the conflagration of the old distillery, have now rolled away in the abyss of time past. Past never to return. Acts that have been done, can never be reclaimed. If good, they may be remembered ; if bad, they should be forgotten, for why should we brood over evil, or mourn for that which has passed away ? Rather look onward and upward. Seven years ! How long to one—how short to another. To Alida, it was an age—an age of lonely misery—an age of blasted hope and love. Born with a heart full of natural affection, she could not live—she only remained on earth—without some one upon whom she might lean ; look up to ; love ; adore as a superior being ; though her equal fellow mortal, yet her superior ; one who could joy in her joy, and sympathize with her in her troubles. In short, one worthy of her esteem, who would esteem her. This she had felt as the great want of her nature,

without which, existence was a blank. It was for this she married. For a few months she flattered herself this was what she had obtained, and she was happy. Then came that cruel desertion, and that void in her heart, that all the love for that dear child, and all her fondness for her affectionate mother could not fill. Sleeping or waking that void was there. For her, Heaven had only created one being who could fill it. To him she had pledged her virgin love ; to him she gave an unsullied heart, and, unworthy as he was of her abiding constancy, she would not forget that he had pressed her fondly to his bosom, and said, " I love you—you alone—and never shall love another." It was a spell—a charm—a fascination—from which she never awakened. She knew he was gone from her ; but still she felt as if all was not yet lost. She longed for some one to love ; some one that she could feel loved her. She pressed her child fondly to her heart, but it did not fill the void.

Those whose minds were cast in a different mold, said :

" Marry again."

Her answer was :

" I am not a widow. To marry while my husband is living, is to acknowledge my child illegitimate. I cannot."

What she could not acknowledge, others said was the truth. Cruel, bitter tongues, spoke bitter words, that went like poisoned arrows deep into her flesh, and rankled there, till all around was a painfully inflamed sore. Seven years thus sped on. The old distillery was a ruin, filled with the ashes and cinders of its former glory. It exactly typified her heart.

Seven years had not passed before Deacon Brandon was mouldering in the little nook at the cross-roads, in one corner of his own fields, called the "grave yard." He had died without raising the mortgage upon the Blythe farm, and Alida and her mother were homeless, but the mother was not long so. She found it in the same yard, where her husband and the owner of the distillery, which had brought so much misery to her home, were sleeping side by side.

Poor Alida, she was now alone in the world, without one sympathising soul to mingle with hers. True, she had friends, warm and devoted. Dr. Field, and the Whites would share their home with her, but there was a spirit of independence in her mind that she could not subdue. She could not bear the idea of being dependent upon charity for bread for herself and child. She felt that there was one in the world upon whom she had a just claim.

"At least," said she, "he is bound to support his own offspring, and as for me, I shall not care, when I see her provided for, how soon I join my mother."

She had, just before her mother died, received reliable information that Nat was living in the town of M——n, in the State of New York, upon a good farm, and in good circumstances, and thither she determined to go. She was able to save barely enough to defray the expense of the journey, out of the sale of the personal property, after paying with scrupulous exactness every debt owed by her mother, and the heavy expense of her long final sickness and funeral. She did not tell her friends her project, for fear they would dissuade her, but led them to suppose she

was going to visit relations in Connecticut. She thought, "If he cannot receive me, certainly he will provide for Celestine, when he sees her pretty face—her bright, mild blue eyes—her brown hair, hanging in such natural ringlets upon her white neck, and graceful form ; or when he hears her speak so mild and sweetly, or sing her pretty songs ; and above all, when she clings her arms around his neck and calls him papa ; he will love her, and cherish, and support her, and then if I can know that she is safe, I can die in peace, and my last prayer shall be for God to forgive him as freely as I do."

It was a sad day in Brandon valley, when Alida and her lovely child took their seats in the rough wagon called a mail-stage, to leave her home and all its associations, and all her old friends and acquaintances, to go out upon the wide, wide world, alone. They never knew till then how much they had loved her. Old and young alike wept. All could remember some good deed, some kind word, or even a sweet smile or sympathetic tear, and all felt that they were parting with a friend for the last time. True, they were not going with her to the grave, but they felt that it would soon claim her for its own, and that lovely child would be an orphan. How they execrated him who had wrecked the fair prospects of this girl, and stranded her upon the very brink of the grave before she was thirty years old. It was well that they did not know her purpose, or they would have laid hands upon her and said, "You shall not go !"

But she has said her last adieu, and the stage rumbles

down the road, while a score or two of tearful eyes are strained to catch the last glimpse as it goes around the old hemlock at the corner.

Long and toilsome was her journey over the mountains and across the lake—for thirty years ago there was not a railroad in existence, and but few steamboats, and those of a rude kind, much unlike our commodious ones of the present day. But toilsome as was the journey, it was far less so than the toil of every day for the last seven years, for that had been the toil of hope deferred—this was the toil of hope and happiness anticipated. For years she never gave up the idea that her husband would return to her ; if not for his wife, for his child—his own image.

Now she was buoyed up with the hope—aye, the satisfaction, that he would receive and love the little Celestine as she loved her, and with that Alida would be content. She had no hope, no care for herself. But the child was lovely in the superlative degree, and all who had ever known her in the valley, had manifested their strong affection ; and it never entered that mother's heart that human beings existed who could hate her. She did not know what mighty changes nature works in one of her septeniads. She knew her own face was, but her heart was not changed, and she could think of Nat only as when his image had been imprinted upon that child, and when his tongue told her that his heart loved her. Seven years had not faded that picture, and in all that time it had been one daily feast to her mental vision. She knew that he had wronged her, but she forgave and prayed for him ; bore and nursed his

child, and trained her to love her father and pray for his return. She never knew how much she had been wronged, for she lived in a holy seclusion from the gossip of fools, and friends would not intrude. She thought her husband had been seduced away from her—she never imagined that human being ever thought that *she* had seduced him from a lawful wife. She thought if he preferred another, she would not repine, and certainly would never ask him to give up that other for her ; but her child must have a protector, and she felt, after her mother's death, that she must seek that protector at once. She felt a presentiment, for which she could not account, that she should join her mother soon, and with her it was a sort of monomania to place Celestine with her father, "and then," says she, "I shall be ready to go." She dared not mention her project to Dr. Field, or Blythe White, or the old parson, for they would have each of them said, "No, come with us ; you and your child shall have a home as long as life lasts."

Oh ! I have forgotten to mention another of the changes of these seven years. Blythe White had crossed the mountains and the lake, fascinated with the description Michael had given of Elithura, and found her all that he had represented ; while she, in her turn, seemed to know as much of him as he did of himself. Under such circumstances, it is easy to imagine how readily a match was arranged. It is still more easy to imagine that Wilma had already concluded one with Michael. Elithura became a bosom friend of Alida, and would gladly have shared her home with her. For herself she would have been content with this, but

Elithura had children of her own, and "how could she love mine as well? No, I will go to her father, and then!"——

What then? It was as much a blank in her mind as it is upon this page. She had no thought beyond "then."

After a week's toilsome journey she arrived at M——, near the home of Celestine's father, and then ——

What then?

CHAPTER XII.

The village hotel—The landlord—The bar-room, and its occupants—A new country village—A gentleman stage-driver—His passengers in trouble—What makes a good son—A good brother—Read and see—"Come with me."—Blessed words of comfort—"Ma! what did you come here for?"—A child's appreciation of character—Cheap happiness, and after-influences of good actions—A surprise, and its painful effects—A beautiful picture—Good-bye, and a last farewell.

It is perhaps not much over a hundred miles on a straight line, from Brandon to the point of her destination, yet it had taken Alida a full week to accomplish it, by the round-about way she was obliged to travel, and her strength was nearly exhausted the evening she arrived at M——, which she found just such a country village as are all too common in every new district of our country. It contained a "Hotel," a name applied to an unpainted two-story structure, with two rooms in front of a rear projection, the architectural design of which was obtained by the carpenter from his mallet, the front being the block, and the rear the handle. One of the front rooms was the bar-room, post office, justice's office, and grand sanhedrim of village politicians. Unpainted, un-whitewashed, black with pine-wood smoke, furnished with a few wood-colored chairs and benches, bearing the deep marks of the nothing-to-do whittling occupants, with a dirty bar counter across one end,

filled with kegs, bottles, cigar boxes, old coats, boots, saddle-bags, bridles, and other things too numerous to mention ; such was the grand reception-room of this village hotel. The presiding genius of the place—the landlord—post-master—justice of the peace, and “leading man of the town,” was a medium sized, dark skinned, dark haired man, with high cheek bones, that bespoke for him a near connection with the Indian race ; and his eyes of jet black, and sparkling keenness, told that he possessed as much cunning and sensuality as nature ever implanted in one individual, without a single one of the moral organs to hold the more animal ones in check.

Alida’s first intention was to stop at this place, and send a request for “Mr. Brandon,” who lived about three miles farther on, to meet her there. With this view she got out of the stage, which was to await supper, and a change of horses, and as the bar-room was the only one open, she entered that, as the evening was cool, and Celestine was anxious to see and feel the influence of the fire, the bright light of which sent its cheering rays through the uncurtained windows. One step within the door was enough—one sniff of an atmosphere, composed of rum, tobacco, and the fetid breaths of those who use them, heated to blood heat in a close room, was enough—Alida could not enter. She drew back, and sat down upon one of the benches of the long dirty portico, where she was obliged to hear the ribald jests of the blackguards within, upon her “fastidiousness ; turning up her delicate nose at the appearance of gentlemen.”

“No doubt some painted Jezebel,”—alluding to the hectic flush on her cheeks—“from the city.”

"She is dev'lish pretty, though, painted or not painted. For my part, I wish my old woman would use—what d'ye call it—rouge—well, rouge, then, if that would make her as handsome as she is."

"Beauty is only skin deep, at best ; but you would have it only paint deep."

"I'll bet drinks all round," said another of the crew, "that them's nat'ral colors ; I took a good look at her. She is some Green Mountain Gal ; they all look about that way. But, cuss me, if that gal of her's don't look like it might be one of Nat Brandon's."

"She aint much of anybody ; look how thick she is with The. Johnson, the stage-driver."

Celestine was no longer cold. She did not want to go in by the fire among all "those ugly looking men."

"Merciful father," thought Alida, "are these human beings, and is this a house licensed for the special accommodation of travellers, where we could no more enter, than into a den of wild beasts."

Just then the stage driver approached, to ask her if he should take off her trunk. It was this that had elicited the foul remark of the brute, who imputed something wrong to the intimacy of a lady with the stage driver.

The truth is, the stage driver was *a man*, and as such he had treated her as a gentleman always treats a woman ; particularly when confided to his care to conduct her on a lonely journey. He had spoken kindly, acted kindly, and had not presumed to ask a single question, touching her purpose for travelling, or where she was going.

He had been polite, agreeable, pleasant, without being obtrusive. But now, the relation between them had changed, and in spite of her efforts to conceal them, the tears of a woman in distress appealed to him for sympathy, protection, assistance ; all of which he determined to give, without stopping to inquire whether the object belonged to "one of the most respectable families, the wife of one of our first citizens," or whether she was some poor forsaken factory girl.

"Oh ! I was going to ask you if I should bring in your trunk ; but I guess you don't want to stop here."

"No, not here. Is this the only public house ?"

"Yes, ma'am ; there are but few houses, you see, in all. The store keeper, and doctor, and blacksmith, and about a dozen others, such as always stick in about a new country village, and some of them pretty hard cases."

"I should think so, by the sample in here. I never saw such a room before."

"Yes, yes, and you wanted to go in. I know the little girl must be cold. Come with me, this way ; here is the parlor, and I will soon have a fire. Come."

And he led the way into the other front room, and in scarcely as much time as it takes me to write it, had a blazing fire of dry pine splinters, exceedingly agreeable to the weary, chilly travellers.

"Now warm yourselves, and I will see if they are going to get you any supper. Risley is off somewhere, and they say the old woman is out of her head again, and things are all out of sorts to-night. Did you intend to stop here?"

"I did, but cannot. I do not know what to do. The family I intended to visit live near here, but I do not know where, and I thought I would stop in the village and send word, but this place—Oh it is awful—do hear how they are carrying on in the bar-room, and how cheerless this one looks."

It did indeed look cheerless—bare floor—bare, rough plastered walls, unpainted doors, windows without curtains, fireplace without fire-dogs, except stones, no shovel and tongs, six old chairs, a dilapidated bureau, a broken looking-glass, and a few very common dirty colored lithograph pictures ; and this was the "parlor" and its furniture. I might have added that every door had to be held shut by placing a chair against it. It was no wonder that Alida exclaimed "how cheerless," and that Celestine should have looked up inquiringly in her face and said, "Ma! what did you come here for?"

She was answered by a single tear, but it caught the eye of the kind-hearted stage-driver, and he felt its influence in his heart, as certain as we feel the electric shock without seeing the fluid. There was a choking in his throat as he said :

"Come with me ; I am going to drive to my father's to-night ; it is only ten miles, and there you will find a place, though it is a rough log cabin in the woods, that is not so cheerless. And my mother, one of the best and kindest-hearted women in the world, will make you as welcome as I am. And my sisters—the oldest is about your age, and the youngest not much older than your little girl, will make you

feel at home as long as you will stay. And such a supper as they will give us—and you shall have as good a bed as a queen. Oh! you need not say strangers. Do you think my mother would not welcome you as warmly as I would? It is because you do not know her. You need not say it is so kind in me; my mother would not love me if I was not so to every other mother; my sisters would not care to kiss me every time I come home, if they thought I had been unkind to anybody else's sisters. I thank God daily that I have such a mother, and I love Him all the more, that I love my sisters so well. Come with me, then, and see them. They never will stop to inquire who you are—what you are—or what you came here for, if I say to them, mother, sisters, here is a lady—a mother and her child, who need your kind care and attention. You will soon feel how welcome you are. To-morrow I will let my brother go on with the mail, and I will come back and see if I can find your friends. Will you come?"

There was a slight hesitation upon the part of Alida. She felt, if they did not ask who she was, that she should be under obligations for their kind hospitality, to tell her story. They would naturally ask if she was a widow—if Celestine was an orphan. She must tell the truth, and yet could strangers sympathise with her? Perhaps they knew her husband as the husband of another woman. To know that he had another wife, might blast him, and do her no good. She began to feel the force of Celestine's question—"Ma, what did you come here for?"

She felt that she could not go among such kind friends as

she felt this stage-driver's family must be, for the influence of that mother's character, and those sisters' love had been impressed upon his own. He might have been born in a log-cabin, bred in the wild woods, and employed in the ordinary occupation of a common mail-carrier, yet he was by nature, and the force of circumstances, a gentleman. It was no wonder that his mother and sisters loved him. If Alida did not love him, she felt a grateful feeling of respect, and because she felt it, she hesitated the more to accept the offer of his hospitality ; but Celestine had none of her fears, none of her reasons for refusing. She looked up a moment in her mother's moistening eye, and slid down from her lap, and went over to where he sat, put her arms around his neck, and looked up so sweetly, so full of childlike innocent simplicity, as she said ; "I thank you, sir, for my ma, 'cause she feels bad, and don't want to talk now, but she will go, I know she will, for I don't want to stay here. I had rather stay with your ma, for she is a good ma, I know she is, 'cause you are good, and so kind to my ma, and I love you for it."

Oh ! what would half the world give for the happiness of that moment, to that man, as he pressed her in his arms, and received her sweet kiss of innocent affection.

"I have," said he to me, about two years ago, while relating the incident, "had my share of the enjoyments of this life, but never felt anything equal to the exquisite sensation that called forth the tears shed over that child. I have often thought too, how very cheaply it was purchased. Only a few pleasant smiles, and kind words, and acts of

natural politeness through the day, and the offer of hospitality for the night, mixed with a proper token of respect for my mother—now, I trust, in heaven—and the remembrance of this little incident, I do believe, has had an influence upon all my conduct in after life. It has made me strive to win the love of children, and the respect of their mothers, by little pleasant attentions upon the great thoroughfare through life.”

“Johnson,” said I, “I have long known you as one of the most popular and pleasing railroad conductors in the United States. I can now trace cause and effect.”

“Yes, and a true source of human happiness. That little girl decided her mother’s course that night, and mine through life. What would I give to know what ever became of her? I never saw or heard of her afterwards.”

“Then she did not go home with you. Why not?”

“We started for that purpose, and as I had become interested in the mother and daughter, both of whom were so handsome—and the mother had such an expression of heavenly beauty, that I could not help thinking she would make one of the company of celestials very soon. I kept up our conversation, hoping to wear off the fatigue of the ride, as it appeared to me her power of endurance was well nigh exhausted. It was one of those bright moonlight autumn nights, such as it does appear to me never shone as splendid in any other region of the world as among the mountains of our state, up near the Canada line. I began to call her attention to the various objects along the road, and related various anecdotes of the owners of several

farms we passed, and among the rest of a gang of counterfeiters, or, at any rate, men who dealt in counterfeit money, and perhaps added horse-stealing to the business, and how some of the leading men of the village, among them Risley, the owner of that delectable hotel, and several of the best farmers in the neighborhood were suspected of being engaged in the business, all of whom had been smugglers during the late war. Here lives one of the gang," said I, pointing to the house, "who ought to be ashamed of himself, for he has a good farm, and if he would work it he might be rich; he ought to be, at any rate, for when he came here seven years ago, he brought over a thousand dollars in gold, which he exchanged, so folks say, for *bogus*, three for one, and passed it all off without being detected; but he will catch it some day, for he drinks like a sot, and Risley has got him completely under his thumb. But that is not all; if the peddler's story is true, he ought to be hung, for he robbed a poor widow of the money he brought here at first.

"There was a slight groan behind me, but I thought it was because the lady was so much tired out by her journey, and so I said some comforting word, as to the road being better now, and we would drive faster. We were just now opposite the house, a double-hewed log one, of two low stories, and a kitchen at the back, and a bed-room off one end as a sort of lean-to. Altogether it was a pretty good-looking place, only that there was an air of neglect visible in everything, that told almost as plain as words that the owner was a drunkard.

"This," said I, "is where one of the gang lives—the one who came here with the gold, and a sweet young wife—they have three children now, and might live so independent and happy, but they are not, for I believe the fellow is haunted with his wicked conscience, and tries to drown it in whisky. I have heard that he was raised in a distillery."

"What is his name?" said the feeble voice of the lady on the back seat.

"Brandon—Nat Brandon."

"Oh God," was the reply, and the words sounded as though they came from another world. It did not seem as if she had spoken them, or could have given them utterance, so unearthly was the sound of her voice. The little girl was leaning her head upon her mother's lap, asleep, but she started up and cried, 'Ma, Oh, ma, what is the matter?' I stopt the horses, jumped off, and ran back and caught her as she was about falling out upon the wheel; the sides of the wagon being open, and she had attempted to rise up and had fainted. I lifted her in my arms as though she had been a little child, for I thought she was dying, and I was sadly frightened, and carried her into the house without ceremony, consigning her to the care of Mrs. Brandon, who, though not a very refined woman, nevertheless had all the fine feelings of her sex for a fellow creature in distress, and with her assistance, we soon revived her from her swoon; and I do think, I never have seen so beautiful a picture in my life, as the one in that little lean-to bed-room that night.

The invalid was of a light, delicate form, with clear white skin, with a delicate blush upon the cheeks, a mild, bright

blue eye, fine brown hair, upon a perfect head, high forehead, oval face, slim neck, rather large mouth when open, and such a smile—heavens, I never shall forget it. Her child was like, and yet unlike her. It struck me all day that she strongly resembled some one I knew. The mother lay with her pallid face, and slightly deranged hair, upon that clean white pillow ; the little girl, with one of her mother's hands clasped in both of hers, stood by the bed, or rather half inclined over on the pillow, with her pretty face beside her mother's, while Mrs. Brandon stood, with a cup of tea in her hand, kindly offering it to her patient. Mrs. B. bore a most striking contrast to the other. She was short, compact built, stout, full face, with eyes so black and sharp that they seemed to emit electric sparks, her hair shining jet black, and her skin quite dark—in short, a perfect specimen of those fine-formed, fascinating French girls of Lower Canada.

“Such were some of the features of the picture that I stood gazing at, almost forgetful that I had seven miles more to drive, until aroused by the clock just behind me, striking nine. I then said, good-night, and gave her my hand, which she clasped with energy, and pulled herself up, saying, ‘Oh, no; not good night, pray take me with you—I must go—I cannot stay here—anywhere else but here—they will kill me when they find who I am—do take me.’”

“I said it was impossible. I whispered to Mrs. Brandon, ‘she is wild—it is only the fatigue and excitement of the journey—she will be over it in the morning, and then she will go to her friends, who live near here. Take good care of her,

and if she does not pay you, I will. Good-night.' She did not hear me. She was in a sort of stupor, or kind of sleep often following a fainting fit, or undue excitement. The little girl did hear, and ran to me, and put her arms around my neck, and kissed me, and said, 'My ma is asleep, and cannot say good-night, but I will for her, and thank you too, you have been so kind to her.' Depend upon it, sir, there is a germ of goodness in that child's heart, which, unless sadly abused, will bring an abundance of good fruit. I only know that she was a most perfect specimen of a Green Mountain Girl. How I should like to know her fate."

Perhaps he soon will. It is told in this volume.

"I promised to come and see them next week, when I came back with the mail, and again said, good-night—but I never did see them again; I only heard that she was a deserted wife of that villain, Nat Brandon."

"Did you call, when you came back the next week?"

"No, for I never came back."

"Never—why, what was the reason?"

"Never, or that is, for more than a year, and then I was a passenger, and not a driver of the mail. I will tell you why, some time, when you have nothing better to do, than listen to a tale I rarely tell—it awakens unpleasant recollections."

"Still I should like to hear it—to learn what could have kept you from those in whom you had become so deeply interested."

"Well, you shall, but let us to-bed now, and to-morrow evening you shall hear it."

CHAPTER XIII.

The stage-driver's story—Sickness and delirium—The power of a strong will over disease—The power of will in saving life—Winter—Wood-chopping—A perilous position—Singular calmness of preparation to avert death—Certain, inevitable death—Echo and its effect—Hope and its glorious outshining upon the woods around the dying prisoner—His escape and tiresome journey home—Man's faithful friend, the dog, rescues his master by his wonderful intelligence.

"Ah, Johnson, good evening. Now shall we have the balance of that story?"

"Yes. Come up to my room where we can be quiet."

"Well, that very night I was taken sick, and had a long run of severe typhus fever. For four weeks I was delirious, and all that time fancied that my two sisters were my late passengers, and that my mother was Mrs. Brandon, and all my conversation tended in that direction. Good nursing and a strong constitution, together with another strong trait of my nature, the love of life, and will to preserve it, as I will prove to you directly, carried me through, and I got well enough to go to work again. My brother liked the business of carrying the mail better than I did, and so I went to work in a new clearing I had commenced about a mile and a half from home, and not quite so far from the house of a brother-in-law. I used to stay about as often at one place as the other. It was a bad arrangement, as in

case of accident, neither family would be alarmed or go to look for me if I should not come home. I felt the force of this in the course of the winter, and so will you directly.

“There had fallen one of our old-fashioned, Northern New York snows, crusted over hard enough to bear a man. I was getting on famously with my clearing, getting ready to build a house in the spring, and all the time building castles, the foundation of which is always above the reach of mortals. It is curious that the presiding princess of all my castles was my late passenger and her angel daughter. Not that I hoped to have her to preside over the hewed log one that I intended to build with a firmer foundation than air, but I did think that I should try for one of the same sort. I was ambitious, and worked early and late, going without my dinner some days, when the piece of bread and meat I brought in my pocket was frozen so that I could not masticate it, without taking up too much of my time. I did so upon the last day of my chopping ; it was intensely cold, with a prospect of a storm, that might hinder my work the next day, and so I worked on as long as I could see, and after twilight I felled a tree which in its descent lodged against another. I could not bear the idea of leaving the job half finished, and mounted the almost prostrate body to cut away a limb to let it down.

The bole of the tree forked about forty feet up, into two equal parts, with large projecting limbs from both. It was one of these that I had to cut away to bring it to the ground. In my haste, perhaps, I was not as careful as I should have been ; at any rate the first few blows eased the lodgment so

that the tree began to settle, and I was just going to jump off, when the fork split, and one foot dropped into the space so that I could not extricate it for the moment, but I felt no alarm, for I knew that I could cut away the tree in a minute, or perhaps draw my foot out of the boot, as the pressure was not severe. At the first blow of the axe, the tree took another start, rolled over, and the split closed with the full force of its giant strength, crushing my foot till the very bones were flattened, like the stems and leaves of a flower pressed between the sheets of a book, by a heavy weight ; and there I hung suspended, just able to touch the points of my fingers to the snow, with nothing to rest upon a moment—the air at zero, and growing colder, no prospect of any one coming that way, that night, the nearest house a mile away, no friends to feel alarmed at my absence, for one would suppose me safe with the other. My first thought was, ‘ Oh my mother, it will kill my mother to learn how I died,’ so near her, almost within call of her voice, thus to perish, thus to break her heart. It must not be—it shall not be—I will live.’

“ But how ? My axe in its fall, rested upon the snow-crust about ten feet off. If I could only get that, I could yet save myself. I did not think how I was to cut my foot loose from the body of that great tree, suspended as I was, with my head down, and suffused with the rushing current of disordered blood, but I thought in that keen blade, my only hope of life was fixed. Just forward of me, but out of reach, grew a slim bush, which I thought if I could obtain, I could form into a hook, by twisting the limbs



"There I hung suspended, just able to touch the points of my fingers to the snow, with nothing to rest upon a moment—the air at zero, and growing colder, no prospect of any one coming that way, that night, the nearest house a mile away."—PAGE 266.

together and draw the axe within my reach. But that bush was about a foot too far away for my utmost exertion. I tried to put the loose foot against the tree, and give my body an oscillating motion till I swung within reach, but it would not do. You may wonder how I could think and act all this time, in such torture as a crushed foot must give. *I did not feel it.* Hope, and my mother, absorbed all my faculties. I did not fear to die, yet I desired to live, and so went on calmly with my work, to avert death. Oh, how I toiled to reach that bush, for without that I had no hope of reaching my axe; yet I could only touch it as I swung that way with the tips of my fingers—I could not grasp it. Yet hope did not forsake me—my failure only drove me to expedients—to an exercise of ingenuity, to accomplish by mechanical force, what unassisted nature could not do. I took off my suspenders, a stout pair of woollen yarn, knit by my young sister as a Christmas present, and now I thought, prepared by her to save my life. I tied them together, and swung them around toward the bush, and the loose end wound about it, and clung as tight as though tied in a double knot.

“I pulled the bush now within reach, and cut it off with my pocket-knife—one of that sort so long known by the name of ‘Barlow knives;’ having a single blade about two and a half inches long, and three-eighths of an inch wide, of equal width all its length, set in a handle of a peculiar form, half its length iron, and half horn or bone. I never shall forget its appearance, for I have a sort of reverence for the very name. I succeeded admirably in fashioning my hook,

and almost felt the handle of the axe in my grasp, so certain was I of success. The stars were now glittering in the sky, and I looked upon the glistening metal of that piece of iron and steel as it lay sparkling in the star-light, with more pleasure than ever a miser looked upon his shining gold. I thought I could kiss its cold surface with pleasure, notwithstanding the frost in it would skin my lips. I had still made no calculation, any more than the miser, how I was to use my treasure when I obtained it, because like him, my whole soul was absorbed in its pursuit. I felt nothing—heard nothing—saw nothing but that one bright spot upon the snow, that single treasure that I should soon call my own—that of all others the most precious—only earthly treasure worth possessing. At length, I was ready to take possession—ready for the felicity of once more grasping the handle of that keen blade, and I extended my staff, and slipped the loop I had formed of the limbs over the end of the helve. I could have laughed or cried with joy at the success of my plan. My mother, I exclaimed, or thought, I do not know which, I shall see you once more. My sisters, I shall again clasp you to my lips and heart. My father—my brother, you will not have to mourn me dead. I was happy. I have stated that the deep snow was crusted over with ice. From the tree that imprisoned me, the ground descended rapidly for a dozen rods or more, to a little creek. My axe lay upon the brow of this hill. The very first movement I made towards twisting the loop of my stick around the handle so as to draw it within my reach, loosened it from its icy rest, and away it went down the hill with the

speed of the boy upon his sled, crashing through the little frost-brittle-bushes, down upon the ice of the creek, down that to a little fall a few rods below, and over that into the unfrozen pool, with a surging sound as it fell in the water, that seemed to send its icy chill through every vein and artery in my whole body, congealing the very heart's-blood to ice, for it crushed all hope, and left the mind one chaos of black despair. Here then must I die without hope, I exclaimed aloud in my agony. The woods wore their wintry stillness—the stillness of a calm, cold, night. It was a night for Echo to be abroad, and this lovely daughter of air and earth, faithful to the command of Juno, sent back the final word.

“Hope ! Blessed word ; how it rang through that old wood. It came up the hill from that little water-fall, where I thought all hope had sunk. It climbed the trees, and dropped down all around me from every pendant twig ; it glittered in every star ; and glistened sparkling bright from every shining particle of frost ; it came to my ear again and again in soft soothing tones ; it was the music of echo, echoing hope to my soul ; and it told me in language never to be forgotten, ‘ there is no place on earth ; no position in which man can be placed, if he will only open his heart to hope, that she will not come in and abide with him.’ The echo of that word saved my life.

“My axe was gone ; why should I pine for an inevitable loss ? I still had my knife. True, it was a rude surgical instrument, but hope gave it a charmed edge, and the love of life gave me strength to climb up by my fastened leg, and

cut away the boot and stocking, and then with that knife, I unjointed my ancle and fell to the ground ; my left leg a footless, bleeding stump. The intensity of the cold saved me from bleeding to death. I tore off a part of my coat, and with my handkerchief and suspenders managed to bind up my leg with a handful of snow, and started to crawl home. I could have gone nearer to my sisters, but I knew a mother's love, a mother's care ; and besides, I was perishing with thirst ; and I knew that there was a spring a little upon one side of the path, which I must reach or die. It was a hard thing to turn aside, and go back and forth almost a quarter of a mile, with my hands cut upon the icy crust till they marked a track of blood. The journey from the path to the spring was the hardest task of that night, and hope almost forsook me, but she came back with the first lave in the pure water, and I succeeded in reaching within sight, and I hoped within call, of the house, and then my strength utterly failed me. I could see my father sitting before the great kitchen fire, busily engaged making for me a new axe helve. My mother sat on the opposite side of the fire, knitting. I knew she was finishing me the last of a pair of stockings. She little thought that one would suffice. My sisters were busy around the fire, and that gave me hope, for I knew that they were preparing supper for my brother, whom they expected every moment with the mail. I had tried my voice in vain, and I could not make them hear. I exerted myself once more, and crawled towards the road that Heman must come. It was a painful task, for besides my exhaustion, I was perishing with cold. Just

then I heard the sweetest strains of music that ever fell upon mortal ears. It was the sound of my brother's stage-horn, and the jingle of his bells coming down the hill—now he is crossing the bridge—now he is coming up slowly on this side, and the bells make but little noise—now is my time to halloo, for if I wait for him to get opposite, he cannot hear, and will drive past with race-horse speed, and I am lost. I strained my voice to its utmost pitch, but he did not, could not hear; but there was with him, another friend; man's faithful friend, who did hear. Old Hunter, the noble old dog, had insisted upon going with him that trip, and brother said, 'let him go; who knows what good may come of it?' Good did come of it, for his ear was quicker than Heman's, and he roused up at the first cry; Heman said 'lay still, Hunter, we are almost home;' but Hunter would not lay still, and as the second cry reached his ear, he leaped out and in a minute was at the spot where I lay upon the snow. He smelt all around, and I held up my footless leg, and said, away Hunter—stop him. Just then, the sleigh had got up the hill, and I heard the whip crack, telling as plain as I could speak, Heman's thoughts; now for a race old Hunter, down to the house. Hunter sprang back into the path and barked loudly, and as the horses came up, he jumped up, seized the reins, and would not let go till Heman called a halt."

"What is it, Hunter? something must be wrong. What is it, my good dog? come here and tell me."

"Hunter let go his hold of the horses, jumped back to the sleigh, and caught hold of Heman's hand, pulling off the

mitten, and away he ran back to where I was, and commenced barking furiously ; but I heard nothing—the effect upon me when I knew that I was discovered by that faithful old dog, and that he never would desert me, or cease his efforts, until he obtained help, had caused a syncope. My brother knew that Hunter was not at play—that something serious was the matter, and he jumped out of the sleigh, and ran after him.

“ In an almost incredible short space after that, he dashed up to the kitchen door with the sleigh, upsetting mother’s wash-tubs, and buckets, and kettles, in his hot haste—crying out as he did so ; ‘ Father—mother—help—help—Theron is dead ! ’ as he lifted me out of the sleigh, and kicked open the door, and handing his burden into the hands of my father, said, ‘ take him—take him, father—I am going for the doctor,’ and away he dashed nearly two miles, sprang out of his sleigh, and into the doctor’s house at a bound, fairly lifted him out of his arm-chair asleep, and had him wrapt in the buffalo skins in the sleigh, and the horses tearing down the lane, before the doctor was fully aware of where he was going, or who had carried him off.

“ Glorious fellow, that Heman, wan’t he. Ah well, he would have done more than that for his brother, but that was enough ; his promptitude saved my life ; for as soon as they brought me in the warm room, the blood started, and if it had not been for the skill of that good old doctor, I should not have been sitting here at midnight, telling you my story of border life. Let’s go to bed.”

"Stop a moment—that foot of yours—is it—?"

"Yes ; nothing but cork. I never tell any one, and nobody suspects that I am a little deficient in my understanding."

CHAPTER XIV.

Alida and Maria Louisa—Two wives in the house of one husband—Alida awakes and finds herself in a strange place—A night scene—Female dignity quails a villain—A blow and its consequences—Oh! is that man my husband—Honor among thieves—Its value—Their plans to entrap a partner, and make him a scape-goat—A stranger robbed, and Nat Brandon suspected—One witness too many—Nat creeps like a thief into his own house—Bitter reflections of "How the world will point at a felon's children."—The escape, pursuit and capture—A steeple-chase, six to one; five are distanced; four down in the mud—The arrest—trial—conviction—sentence—Life ends in the penitentiary.

WHEN Alida awoke again, it was late at night—probably past the middle, and she was alone with Celestine, who was sleeping sweetly by her side. A candle was burning upon the little table by the bed-side, which showed by the short wick that some one had just left it. There was a glass of water, and the cup of tea which had been offered her some hours before, and several little delicacies of food to tempt the appetite, if she should awaken thirsty or hungry. Various little attentions had been given to make the sick stranger comfortable and welcome, all of which Alida took in at a glance, and then thought :

"Would she treat me thus, if she knew that I was his lawful wife, and had a right to claim her husband from her?"

Poor girl! she did not know that exactly the reverse was

the truth—that Maria Louise was the lawful wife, and herself the wronged one in every sense of the word.

“What shall I do,” continued Alida. “I shall be hated as soon as known; I cannot remain here a single day; I cannot think of leaving my child with such a man—although he is her father. What shall I do?”

She unconsciously spoke the last sentence aloud. She was answered by the voice of a drunken man in the next room, groping about in the dark, and trying to find the latch of her door.

“Do! Why the h—ll don’t you get up, old woman, and bring me a light, and get some supper. You are always abed ’fore I get home. Open the door, I say.”

“Not there—Oh not there. Wait a minute, and I will get a light,” said another voice.

“Not there—why not there; I should like to know—Can’t I go where I please in my own house?”

“Yes, yes, but there is a lady in bed there.”

“A lady—well who is she? I want to see who you have got. I don’t know about its being a lady. I tell you what it is old, woman, if I find a man—if you have got a man in here, I will cut his throat. Let go of me.”

“No, no, it is a poor, unfortunate sick woman, that the stage-driver brought in here this evening; she fainted in the stage.”

“Then I will have her out. I am not going to have my house turned into a beggar’s hospital when I am away.”

What a scene for Alida. It was Nat, crazy drunk, and his wife contending with him to keep the brute from drag-

ging her out of bed, and turning her into the street. He made another effort to open the door ; his wife begged him not, and tried to hold him back.

“ If you don’t let go of me, I will knock you sprawling, you —— Canadian——”

He added a blow, and an epithet of the most opprobrious character.

“ I *will* see who is in that room, or cut her throat.”

“ You shall ! Behold the wife you swore to cherish, and love for ever. The victim of your perfidy and robbery. The almost direct cause of your father’s and my mother’s death. Look at me !”

Alida felt that it was time for her to act. The drunken, crazy brute, had threatened the life of one wife, and had struck the other. Now he was coming to the door, to drag the poor mother and child out of her sick bed, and turn her at midnight into the street, because he chose to call her a beggar—one whom common humanity had taken under his roof, without his consent. She thought, “ he can but kill me, and that would be preferable to this torture. Can this be the man I never have ceased to love—yes, love ceases now.”

With these thoughts she arranged her clothes, which had not been removed when she lay down, took the candle in her hand, and opening the door, uttered those words—enough to have annihilated a man who had a heart—whose nature had not been blunted, by long years of beastly indulgence in rum.

For a moment he was speechless. He trembled like

a detected thieving dog. He rallied, and tried to fawn, but she bade him back. "Do not touch me. I did not come under your roof—I fainted at your door, and was brought here senseless, and found a kind, ministering angel in that other victim of your wickedness and rage, on whom you have just inflicted violence. Lay but a finger on her again, or approach this room to shame your child with the sight of her wretched father, and I will do the tardy vengeance of heaven upon one so unfit to live. To-morrow, you shall take the road to the penitentiary."

With these words ringing in his ears, she closed the door in his face, and went back to her bed, more calm than she had felt for years.

His wife had been so completely thunderstruck by the turn things had taken, that she could not utter a word. Alida had been represented to her as ugly as she was worthless, and that was bad enough. She never supposed that she was a wife, or that a man could desert one so beautiful, so lovely. She had been taught to think and speak of her as a miserable thing, who had tried to supplant a lawful wife in her husband's affections, and had met with a just punishment—an illegitimate child. The truth now, for the first time, illuminated her mind. The effect of her sudden appearance, and her few words upon Nat, was enough to convince her that Alida spoke the truth—that that roof sheltered two deeply wronged women.

There was in the nature of Maria Louise, more of the natural wildness of the country in which she was born, and more of the revengeful nature of her semi-savage parents,

than Alida had, though the latter had uttered a distinct asseveration of her intention, to resort to the last extremity left for an injured woman, if her assailant should persist in his efforts to enter her room.

Maria Louise did not utter any threat, but she went quickly to the kitchen, and procured a light, and almost instinctively, and without thought of "what for," she took in her right hand, a long, sharp-pointed carving-knife. She had no occasion for it—the man whom she intended to confront and call villain, had left the house. She listened, and heard the sound of his horse's feet going down towards the village.

"Yes, gone back to Risley's, to steep a gnawing conscience in liquid fire. Oh, is that man my husband, or is he another's. I must learn which of us has the prior right.

"May I come in?" said she, at the door of Alida's room, "he is gone; and I do not feel as though I could wait 'till morning to learn which of us has been the most wronged."

Although they had a long conversation, and mutual explanations, she was not at last satisfied which had been injured most, although satisfied that in a legal point of view, she was the wife, yet in another view, she could not but feel that Alida had the most holy claim. She certainly had upon his property, and so far as the wife could give it, that, she said, Alida should share. The husband was too worthless, as a whole, to be worth dividing.

Nat did go to Risley's, for he was his counsellor in all emergencies. He told him enough of his story, colored as it was by fear, to convince Risley that he was in a fair way for

the penitentiary, and Risley added to his fear by telling him that there was no doubt that was what Alida had come there for.

"Your only chance is in Canada, but it is too late to start to-night; you must keep dark through the day, and at night we will have everything ready, and as soon as all is still, you must ride."

The fact is, that Risley saw a chance to work upon Nat's fear and make capital out of it, and although there is honor among thieves, there was not enough with him to prevent him from sacrificing a companion in crime for his own selfish advantage. The subject had been already talked over by the gang, of which both these worthies were members, how to get rid of Nat, whose habits were getting so bad that they were afraid of him, and that his detection would bring out some others never suspected. Nat had always been the tool of others, rather than a rogue upon his own volition.

In a secret conclave held the next day, it was agreed that "sending him to the penitentiary for bigamy, would do the company no good—let us make him a scape-goat for the good of the club. If he is to be 'sent down,' he might as well be sent for something."

With this salvo to their india-rubber-consciences, it was left to Risley and two other "managers," to arrange things.

In pursuance of this plan of operation, the gang visited Nat in his hiding-place, one after another, during the day, with well-concocted tales of proceedings already commenced to arrest him, until he was thoroughly alarmed. In his distress, he sends a note to Willshot, the village "attorney

and counsellor at law," and gets a very polite note in reply, that he is already "retained," on the other side. That was true, but it was on the side of his companions in crime. And he further added that, "of course he, Nat, would quietly submit to the arrest, and not think of running over the line ; as you know I am your friend, and won't be hard on you at the trial ; but, you know, I must make my fee. By the bye, Risley wants something done about his debt before I give the writ to the sheriff."

This produced the desired effect.

"What shall I do !" was his exclamation to Risley, who already had a mortgage upon the farm, dñly executed by Nat and his wife, but he now proposed that he should give him a quit claim deed, including personal property, for which Risley would furnish him with money and a better horse than his own, and assist him to get off that night in time to reach the line before morning ; and once over there, he would be safe, until they could hush up this unfortunate affair

This plan was all perfected, and it was arranged that Nat should slip out about midnight, and go alone to the stable, take his horse and ride for Canada.

It does seem as though the devil assisted the wicked in the prosecution of their nefarious plans. At first it was only intended to secrete a quantity of counterfeit money in the pad of Nat's saddle, and then arrest him as a counterfeiter, but it so happened that a traveller arrived, and put up at "the hotel," after dark, with a very fine horse, and he came into the stable while Nat was seeing where his horse was

located, that he might find him in the dark. Nat admired the stranger's horse very much, and asked him sundry questions about his age, and value, which was very high, and thus fixed his identity in the gentleman's mind. It was also fixed upon his mind that Nat observed, "that is a fine watch of yours," as he casually drew his gold lever from his pocket, to see the time of night.

The lodging-room of Nat and the stranger that night, was the same, and in the morning he found that his watch was missing, and his room-mate gone. Risley assured him "that it was impossible that Nat should have stolen his watch, for he had known him for seven years, as honest a fellow as ever lived—one of the first citizens—son of one of the first families of Vermont, and he lived only three miles off."

"Then why was he stopping here, so near his own house, all night, or rather the first half of it, for I think he went out about midnight."

The stranger evidently thought no one would stay, except by compulsion, in such a house. It was in Risley's mouth, to tell him about the "family difficulty," but then he had just endorsed his good character, and so he told him, "that it was in consequence of his having drank rather too freely, so he did not like to go home, till he had slept it off a little."

This the traveller knew was a lie, for he had seen him in the stable more sober than could be expected, from a frequenter of such a vile rum hole as that "traveller's rest" evidently was. Risley was not aware of this interview, or

he would have had some other lie ready. Just at this point a fellow came from the stable to say that the stranger's horse was missing.

"Then he is stolen, and the same man that stole my watch, has taken my horse also, and that is the fellow who was admiring both in the stable last night, and who slept in the same room with me."

Truly it did look so, and yet it was not so. Bad as he was, Nat Brandon was not the thief. The conspirators had abstracted the watch from its owner's pocket and put it into Nat's, and had shifted the horses in the stall, so that all unconsciously he had become a robber and a horse thief. Still Risley contended that he must be mistaken. He was probably willing that Nat should escape with his booty, as it would more effectually prevent his return to claim his property, or expose his associates in iniquity, than though he were sent to states' prison. So he said :

"Oh, sir, you are quite mistaken in that man : I can bring a dozen of our first citizens to swear to the good moral character of Nat Brandon."

That was one witness too many. That name closed the case against this special pleader, for the other replied, with a look of amazement :

"Nat Brandon ! was that Nat Brandon ?"

"Yes, do you know him ?"

"No, but I know his character from boyhood, in his father's old distillery ; smuggling during the war ; his infamous double marriage, and robbery of one of the best girls that ever lived, and her poor widowed mother. He is a

double-distilled villain, and if you do not wish to be considered as an accomplice, you will aid me in recovering my property. Where can I find a magistrate?"

Villains are apt to be cowards. Risley was one, and he quailed before the indignation of an honest man. He was now as anxious for Nat's capture, as he was a minute previous for his escape. He had been afraid that Nat would tell his story to the stranger, who having heard his character endorsed by Risley himself, and several of his set, might conclude that he was honest, and that some one else, as Nat would allege, had stolen the watch, and put it into his pocket, and that he had taken the horse by mistake. If things should take this turn, he would refuse to prosecute, and thus all their plans would fall to the ground. But when he found that the stranger's opinion was already fixed in the right line, he felt the chance a good one to get rid of an old associate, and in so doing, draw public attention away from others, ten times more guilty. He was wonderfully quickened too, when he learned the stranger's name, as he signed it to the affidavit, "GEORGE YORKBRIDGE." Yes, it was the soldier—the deserter—the actor in that fearful scene on the ice—now a well-known merchant, of the firm of "YORKBRIDGE, FIELD, & GRANLY," in a town about sixty miles distant. Risley had good reason to know the name, for one of his agents had passed a large sum of counterfeit money at their store, some of the goods of which purchase were then in his house. He felt as every guilty man must feel, when an honest man looks him in the face, and says, "Perhaps you are an accomplice of the villain you are trying to screen."

He therefore became suddenly convinced of the suspected culprit's guilt, and of the necessity of proceeding at once to effect his capture, as he had already got six hours the start, quite enough to carry him over the line, if he had used them to advantage. But he had not—he had gone home, and crept like a thief into his own house, to obtain a few needed articles ; but what with him was a still stronger motive, he longed to obtain one glance at his child—Alida's child. He hoped to find the candle burning as before in her room, and then by going into the loft over-head, he could look down upon her face through the cracks of the floor, as she lay asleep on her mother's arm. But in this he was disappointed—all was darkness, and the silence of peaceful night held its court in that room. How like a criminal he crept about his own house—no, it was not his own now, for he had given the title to another, and the only equivalent received was rum.

All his acts here only served to make his guilt more apparent, and his arrest more easy, for it so delayed him, that he was easily overtaken, and found with saddle-bags packed for a long journey. Owing to the fatigue of the night before, his wife did not awaken while he was in the house, and only as he rode away, when she sprang up and looked out to see him mounted upon a horse that she knew was not his own, and she felt that it was a stolen one. She did not feel the sting of the blow he had given her—a parting blow—because this was so much harder, it deadened the force of the other. She forgot that, and would have warded off this—would have called him back—would have

walked barefooted to the village, to restore the stolen property—would have forgiven him all his wrongs to her, and prayed Alida to forgive him, for she was a woman, and he was her husband, the father of her children. Such is woman's nature.

It was too late ; the deed was done, and she went back and lay down with her little ones, weeping bitter tears over them, as she thought, "how the world will point at them all their lives, as the children of the drunkard and horse-thief. Perhaps they will have to answer when asked, 'Where is your father?' 'In the penitentiary, a chained convict.'"

How she did pray now that he might escape, for she thought the disgrace would not be quite so complete, as it would if he should be arrested, tried, and convicted.

How she counted the hours, and calculated the distance to the line, and finally began to think "now he is safe," when she heard the clatter of hoofs coming up the road, and looked out to see half a dozen of the sheriff's blood-hounds sweeping by, as though on a race for life. There was no need for such race-horse speed. The bird had not used his wings, or he would have been beyond their reach, for he was mounted upon a "Morgan horse," a breed since become renowned through all the states for fleetness and endurance of toil, like a thing of iron. Ten miles an hour was an easy gait without tiring, and he would easily crowd on twenty at a push, without much danger of breaking down. His owner had no hope that his pursuers would overtake him. Risley had, for he knew, but dared not say it, that it was Nat's intention to stop at his house. If Nat had been half

as big a villain as Risley was, his pursuers would have been too late.

Nat had been congratulating himself upon the fine properties of his new purchase, so much better than he expected, notwithstanding Risley's recommendation, while it was yet dark ; but when light began to appear, it struck him that the horse he was riding, was not colored like the one he had traded for ; yet he was sure that he had made no mistake ; but when it became fully light, he was satisfied that there was some fatal error. While wondering whether he was a horse-thief or not, he discovered the watch in his pocket. His first thought was to turn directly back, and surrender the property, and explain as well as he could how it came into his possession.

"For," said he to himself, "I have endured for seven years the horrid torment of a guilty conscience for one robbery, and I do not wish to add to my present misery, or be branded with the name of horse-thief."

He had actually turned about, and ridden back several miles, when he heard the sound of his pursuers advancing upon him at a rate which assured him that they were bent upon his capture. His first thought was, "it cannot be for this, it must be for the other charge, and if I am arrested, there is no escaping the penitentiary. I will not be taken. Fool that I was to turn back, but it is too late now to get off upon the road ; I must take to the woods."

Fool that he was to take that course ; but then he did not know the speed and power of his steed. On the road, he would have distanced all of his pursuers, and crossed the

line in triumph. In the woods they had him at an advantage ; being six to one, they could spread out and prevent him from striking off right or left. But as it was, he led them one of the jolliest steeple-chases ever rode in the state. If he had had decision of character enough to have turned off as soon as he heard his pursuers, he might have gone unseen ; but he hesitated so long what course to pursue, that one of the foremost riders caught a glance as he left the road, and gave pursuit, with a yell, such as is only heard from an Indian, or a half-savage frontier white man, in pursuit of his prey ; no matter whether it is a wild beast, or, as in the present case, one of his fellows, and late a boon companion, whom he had sworn to "stand by through thick and thin."

Perhaps he afterwards eased his conscience with the idea that he tried to stand by, or ride by him through the thick woods, and the thin mud in the swamps, they met with in the chase. No sooner had the leader's yell been given, than away went the whole pack, far more like savages than civilized human beings.

Nat had not forgotten his early training, or his smuggler rides through the woods, and his horse was not new in such travelling, and whether his rider would or not, he was up for a race, and tore through the bushes, swamps, and mud, up hill, and down, jumping creeks, leaping rocks or logs in the way, and would upon fair ground have won the field. After some eight or ten miles, he came to the bank of a stream, too deep to ford, too wide to leap, and had to turn up its bank almost in the face of his followers, who were

trailing behind. The stream soon forked, and the one before him was a wide sluggish creek, full of black mud in the bottom, yet it must be crossed, or here he must yield himself to his foes. If he could have seen its width in time to stop, he would perhaps have hesitated to make the leap. Not so his horse. Those in pursuit were now, by this double, close upon him, yelling like furies. Nat's horse would sooner die than let another win the race, and he never hesitated a moment, but sailed over, and came down upon the soft bank on the other side, as easy as though it had been a four-foot ditch. The two foremost of the others, thought their horses could go where anything else with hoofs had ever gone, and took the plunge—plunge it was, head and ears under the black muddy water. The next two never stopped to think what was before them—they saw their companions going ahead, and followed, full tilt—over they went, clear of those floundering below, struck the bank half a length too short, and rolled over backwards, down into the black pool. The fifth rider just had time to hold-up, before he took the same cold bath, and halloo to the last of the company, who had been completely distanced, to cross the stream higher up, and head him that way. So, after all, it proved that the race was not to the swift, for the slowest of the party, was the winner.

A more forlorn looking set never entered the village of M——, than the escort of Nat Brandon; for those who were not beplastered from crown to sole, both men and horses, with black mud, looked as though they had been chased up a crab apple-tree, and down a thorn bush.

It is needless to follow Nat Brandon any further. He was the apt scholar of his father's trade. He made and used intoxicating liquor—became a drunkard, and a villain. In the business of a smuggler, he learned to cheat his government, and cheating his fellow-men followed easily. But worst of all, his habits brought him into bad company, by which many a man has been ruined. He was now, without a positive crime, a felon. He was the victim of a villainous conspiracy of men, who would not hesitate to swear his life away, if it had been needed to save their own worthless necks. It was not. Upon his examination, every circumstance of the past two days proved him so guilty, that his assertions, though strictly true, only served to make everybody cry out, "What an abandoned wretch, to try to shift off his guilt upon honest people!" We need not go with him to the jail, or accompany him to the court-house, where his conviction is certain, and his sentence for ten years sure, with an intimation of more in reserve, if he lives to serve the state that length of time.

But he did not. Though worthy of punishment, he died a victim to the law, upon a charge of which he was innocent. But his memory was loaded with infamy, as a convicted robber, horse-thief, and counterfeiter; and in a state-prison cell, death found Nat Brandon, a better man than he had lived.

Risley, of course, seized upon all his property—he had the legal right. He offered to let Maria Louise remain, "upon certain conditions." That they were base, may be

inferred, for sooner than accept them, she went with her children, to the only refuge of the poor—the robbed—the oppressed—the widow and fatherless— a home in the county poor-house.

CHAPTER XV.

A chapter of sad scenes—Alida and Maria Louise talk of Nat—Celestine, and a child's opinion of her father—She gets a scar, that is long afterwards remembered—A new character introduced, and his character painted—What fops think of women—Alida and Celestine start on a journey, which has an unexpected termination—Flight to the woods at midnight, to escape a villain—Alida followed by wolves, faints, and falls in the road, and is found by one who would have gladly shared his home with her, but she dies in his arms, leaving poor Celestine in a wolf's den.

THE arrest, and certainty of conviction of Nat, had a more distressing effect upon Alida, than upon his other wife, because her nature was more susceptible to such influences as produce grief. For some days, she sunk under the shock which fell upon her, in the weakened state of her body and mind, with such suddenness, and such force. Not that she cared much for him or herself, but that he was the father of her child, and as the facts could not be hidden from her, they sunk into her mind, producing the sad conviction, that her father was such a man as she had already learned to look upon with dread, disgust and shame. This first struck the mind of her mother, when, after having thoughtlessly talked over the matter fully, with the other of these two much wronged women, in presence of Celestine, the child looked up tearfully in her mother's face, and said :

"Ma, must I keep all the commandments that I read in my primer?"

"Certainly, my child—all of the ten commandments of God's law."

"Ma, I cannot keep the fifth one—I cannot honor that man."

Nothing more was said—nothing more could be said. There was no chance for argument or comment. It was a time for thought. Alida clasped her child to her heart, and thought, "this is no place for us, we must go away—where shall we go?"

She thought, anywhere but here. She felt, too, every time that Risley came there, that he looked upon her as an incumbrance upon his property. She was in his way; he felt under restraint in her presence. Something, too, seemed to say to her, that he had said to Marie Louise, that if she wanted any favors of him, she must get Alida out of the house. This was the truth. She would have gone sooner than she did, but just then Celestine met with an accident, burning her hand severely, the scar of which became a mark which led to a very unexpected recognition, in after years.

She had fully made up her mind, to go back to her old friends at Brandon valley, where she intended to ask that Celestine might have a home, and then she should be ready and willing to lie down in that little grassy nook, with her father and mother.

It was Alida's intention to take the stage, and the same route back, that she came, but there was a young man who was in the habit of coming frequently to the house, who

offered to take her in a light Dearborn, travelling slower and easier than in the rough mail wagon ; which offer she gladly accepted, as he was going nearly a hundred miles on her route.

This was a young Frenchman, many years her junior, but who had apparently become very much attached to Alida, and with Celestine a very great favorite. He taught her a great many French words, how to count in French, sung her French songs, and told her many wild woods stories, and thus by winning the heart of the child, gained the confidence and esteem of the mother, which, perhaps, he mistook for love. If conjugal affection had been in his mind, in a few years more, Celestine would be a more suitable mate than her mother. She simply thought him amiable, and as his manners were all fascinating, she could but show a degree of regard towards him. Perhaps this turned his brain, so that he thought, like many other insignificant coxcombs, that every woman who receives their attentions, or listens to their pointless conversation without being disgusted, is in love with them, that they may toy with one at pleasure, until suspected, and then cast her aside for another. Self conceit is a besetting sin of fops ; and with them civility to females, a sort of condescension on their part, for which the recipients should be extremely grateful. If a lady treats them with civility in return, or manifests a degree of gratitude for their politeness, they forthwith fancy they have won her heart, or that their own persons or conversation, are so irresistible, she could not refuse them any favor they might ask.

This was probably the case with Lafale ; for they were

no sooner on their journey, than he began to make love and offers of marriage to Alida. She laughingly told him to wait a few years, and he might have Celestine. Did he remember that in after years, and seek the daughter's ruin, because refused by the mother? Some human beings carry a spirit of revenge through life; for a fancied slight of their vain pretensions.

During the three days' journey, his importunities grew so strong, that Alida began to fear that he might resort to some unjustifiable course toward her, while in the solitude of the deep forests they passed through. Several times, he made efforts to get an opportunity to talk with her, free from the restraint of Celestine. This Alida as carefully avoided. She felt that her child was a shield and protection to her mother, as a mother often is to a child. One thing that struck Alida with some alarm was, that Lafale did not seem to have any object in his journey, and she feared it had been undertaken solely on her account, and with no good motive; and she was therefore delighted at the thought, that the next morning they would part, she hoped for ever. He had several times urged her to accept of money, to pay her expenses upon the remainder of the journey, but she strenuously refused. She might have accepted but for one thing; she noticed that every time he paid out money, he drew a bill from a roll that he carried in a sort of secret pocket, always alleging that he had no change, or small bills. She came at length to the conclusion that he *had* an object in travelling; and that was to exchange counterfeit money, for good bills or coin.

At their last stopping place, he introduced Alida as Mrs. Lafale, but she thought, at the time, that it was only one of his lively jokes. She was not well pleased with the appearance of things here. Lafale seemed to be a familiar acquaintance, and coupling some remarks, with what she had heard of the gang at M——, and all with what she had seen of his passing counterfeit money, she was satisfied that this was one of their headquarters. Above all, she disliked the appearance of the landlady. She could not but feel that there was no chance of sympathy for her, in case of necessity of appealing to her, and a sort of dread began to creep over her, of some impending evil.

“What if he should presume upon the idea conveyed in that introduction, that I am his wife?”

The more she thought of it, the more she said to herself, “What a foolish idea ; I will not believe it.”

When she went to her lodging-room, she found that a little cot had been made up in addition to the standing bed

“What is that for?”

“Oh, the other bed is a narrow one, and I thought you would want that for the little girl.

“Oh, very well. That will do. I shall not want anything else. Good night.”

She was glad to get rid of her companion before she should betray any of the thoughts rushing into her mind. She could not help feeling as though there was some villainous scheme concocting against her in that house, but she meant to give no evidence of her suspicions.

Celestine was pleased with the notion of occupying “that

pretty little bed ;” and Alida did not oppose her, for she felt that some one was listening in the next room. Celestine looked up at her mother very innocently, after she had been for some time laying with her eyes closed, as though asleep, and said—“ Ma, Mr. Lafale is a nice man, 'aint he ? but I don't want him for my pa.”

“ Why, dear, what made you say that ?”

“ Why, ma, I heard him tell that lady so ; and then he hugged her, and kissed her ; and she acted just as though she didn't care. But you won't let him be my pa, will you ?”

“ No, indeed. There, now, go to sleep. I will fasten the door.” And she went and turned the key, and the bolt sprung as though the lock was one of the best in the world. It occurred to her, however, to look at it with the light. and behold, there was a secret arrangement on the end of the key, which was filed square, evidently to allow of its being turned on the other side. She could have taken the key from the lock, but what better would that have been, since another key might easily fit the plain wards ? Instead of going to bed, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and stood ready for a night walk, if necessary. She put out the light, and sat down close in the corner near the door. She had fallen asleep there, and had quite a refreshing nap, when she heard the click of the door-lock. As it opened, she saw by the size, and knew by the step, that it was Lafale. He went first towards the cot, and finding that Celestine was there, turned back, and closed, and locked the door, but he locked Alida out, instead of in. Five minutes afterwards she was alone in a dreary woods-road, flying as though to save her

life. It was to save that which to every woman is dearer than life—her virtue and honor. Flying from man, who should be her protector, as she would from a wild beast ; leaving the habitation of man at the lone midnight hour, for the abode of wild animals in the forest, because there was less danger among beasts than men. She expected to find a house soon, where she could appeal for succor, but she took a road that led her deep into the woods. It was only barely light enough for her to see the opening of the road through the trees, without being able to pick her way, and she soon grew tired, and not finding any house within a mile, concluded to turn back, and had faced about for that purpose, when she saw a sight in the road she had come, right upon her track, that chilled the blood in her veins.

This was a pair of gaunt, grey wolves. She screamed, but they maintained their ground, and she turned and fled the other way. They followed, and every time she gave a glance back, there they were only a few rods behind. How long this distressingly exciting scene continued she never knew, but it was until fatigue overcame her, and she fell fainting upon the ground, in the middle of the road. From the tracks afterwards seen in the dust, it was evident that the wolves came up, and walked several times around her, drawing a little nearer each time, until they had come close enough to smell of her inanimate form, and then, probably, supposing her dead, turned and ran off down the road they came, either to obtain a reinforcement, or else, as old hunters say, because they will not touch a dead body ; they must rend all their prey alive, so as to drink the warm

blood, or else they will not eat the flesh, unless driven by extreme hunger, as men often are, to eat food that a full stomach would abhor. It is also a fact that the American wolf seldom attacks and destroys human beings, and I believe never except in hard winters. They have frequently been known to follow persons for miles, particularly females, without approaching them. It is not likely that these animals would have attacked Alida, but she was equally alarmed as though they had, and had swooned so dead that she might never have awakened, if some one had not come to her assistance.

It was a clear, but chilly night, and when she sank down, she was in a violent perspiration, and all unused to such a bed, so that it was no wonder, that when wakened about daylight, by the approach of a wagon, she was utterly unable to rise. The gentleman driving, did not observe her, until the horses started at the unusual sight in the path, sprang aside, and had well nigh run the wagon-wheels over her neck, in spite of the strength of a very skillful driver.

"The cold chills," said he, "creep over me to this day, every time I think of that night. I had a considerable load, and a fiery pair of horses, and had started very early, and drove about five miles, or just far enough to get them warmed up, and was going at a smart trot, when all of a sudden, they sprang out of the path—a very unusual thing with them—and seemed inclined to run. I cast one glance to see what had startled them, and there—mercy on me, I see it now—there, right under their feet, it seemed to me, and right before the wheels, lay a woman—by her appear-

ance, a well-dressed lady. I had no thought but that she was already dead, but I was just as anxious not to mangle her corpse, as I should have been to keep off of her if alive ; so I thought, but just then, I heard a deep groan, and that proved that life had a stranger claim than death. There was no time to think. I felt as though I had a load pressing upon me, which I must throw off. The first start of the horses had been back, by which the wagon was cramped to the left, and then they aimed to pass the object on that side ; this would have brought one wheel directly over her head, or else the other one on a stump, and upset the wagon directly upon her body. All this she saw, and I perceived she was struggling to move. I shouted, 'Lay still, for God's sake, don't move.' I then gave the horses a sudden strong pull to the right, and being well broken to the bit, they came round with a jerk—the near horse actually jumping over the body, and the next bound, both plunged into the bushes on the other side of the road, very much to the danger of my eyes, but, oh, what a relief to my mind. I felt as though I had barely escaped from again causing the death of a fellow creature, while driving those same horses. If I had destroyed this life, I do believe I should have gone distracted. I hitched my horses as soon as I could get them calm, and went back. The person was still laying in the same spot, as helpless as a child. She said, wildly, 'you won't kill me, will you,' as I lifted her up, and carried her to my wagon. 'Oh no, I won't kill you, nor hurt you ; I will take you to some kind friends, and take good care of you, until you are well. I supported her as well as I could

in my arms, about a mile, to where I intended to stop for breakfast, where I could get her well taken care of, and if I should conclude to carry her home with me, where I could leave some boxes of goods, and make room for her to ride. It had been a cold night, and she was badly chilled, and delirious, and nearly insensible ; but my landlady, a kind soul, who got her into her own warm bed, soon got her roused up so she could take a cup of tea, and began to feel better, and then she desired to see me.

“She is very pretty,” said the old lady, “but she is not long for this world ; I can see the angel smile upon her face. If there is anything on her mind, do encourage her to say it, and set her house in order, poor thing. She talks dreadful wild, I can’t make out what it is all about. But it is something about wolves chasing her all night, and about a man in her room, and a child, and the man ought to go to the penitentiary, and a great sight of such talk. Now I don’t like to be suspicious, and I don’t think I am, but a body cannot help guessing—you needn’t laugh—I know what you want to say ; Yankees are always guessing ; well I don’t care, they most always guess right ; and so I guess that this gal has been too pretty for her own good, and some man has got the better of her, and so she has run away from house and home, poor thing ; and then about the child ; well I don’t like to suspicion anybody, but I shouldn’t wonder much if she had fed the wolves, and that is what lays so terrible on her mind, that she wants to talk to you about. I do wonder if she wouldn’t like to see our minister ? He is a desper’t nice man, but I do think though he is the least

mite in the world too harsh with dying folks ; asking them if they ain't afraid they're going right straight to hell. But then again, he lifts them right up when he prays, he is so powerful. I do hope, if you talk to her, that she will tell you if there is anything awful on her mind, and if there is, we will send for minister, 'cause I guess it would kinder do her good, to have him pray with her. She thinks she is going to die, but then she is crazy, for she says that you killed her ; that you drove right over her in the road ; but then she just said 'afore that, that the wolves tore her all to pieces and eat her up ; and then she will fly off about the child, so after all I guess—well, well, it ain't worth while to guess any such thing now, unless she was going to get well, and then it would be a dreadful thing to be sure. Well, I declare now to gracious, how I am running on. Poor girl, come, go and see her. She is dreadfully anxious to know who you are, but I did not like to tell her, only that you was a young merchant, that didn't live just about here. I didn't know but it might be somebody that you used to know 'fore you were married. Ah me ! Poor girl !'

“ In this pious ejaculation of Mrs. Green, I could heartily join—Poor Girl ! not perhaps poor in purse, but still poor, for she was alone in the world, dying among strangers, without a single friend to console her ; without one familiar face for her to gaze her last look upon, and though she might be unable to speak her dying thoughts, she could give that gentle pressure of the hand, that sends its silent language to the heart. Poor girl, truly. My own opinion of her, varied from that of Mrs. Green, who thought her some conscience-

stricken, wretched mother, who had abandoned her helpless child, to the tender mercies of the wolves. I believed her a poor maniac, who had probably wandered from her friends, and I had already dispatched a man down the road towards the lake, to make inquiries, as we all believed that she had come from that way. We were all mistaken, for she had come over by a cross-road, from another main one, five or six miles distant. Of course the only trace the messenger found of her, was her own and the wolf-tracks, where I found her. He never thought of going off the road to make inquiries, and thus how she came where she was found, was left a mystery. As it was still dusk when I found her, and as I had consigned her to the care of Mrs. Green without looking in her face, I was not able to tell whether her judgment was correct or not, in regard to her angelic beauty. I did not even stop to inquire whether she was old or young, and I was not at all afraid to see her for fear it might be 'somebody that I used to know before I was married.'

"As I entered the room, she was sitting bolstered up in bed ; Mrs. Green had got her clothes off, and a nice white wrapper of her own, with one of her tasty caps on her head, and certainly she did look the most angelic I ever saw any woman look in my life. She had told Mrs. Green that she had something very important to tell me, and that was what the old lady meant by hoping she would ease her mind—evidently expecting some terrible confession. Mrs. Green preceded me into the room, so that I was mostly concealed from the invalid, until Mrs. Green said, 'here my dear, here is Mr. Granly, and'——

"The sentence was broken off by a sudden start, and piercing scream from the bed, as if the sound of my name had fallen upon her like an electric shock. For a moment Mrs. Green looked upon me with utter abhorrence, for she thought me the guilty cause of all this wreck of young life—the murderer of one of nature's most lovely gems—and she was indignant, and would have driven me from the room, but it was too late. One glance at the poor sufferer, as she reclined upon the pillows in the clear light, was enough—one glance of her eyes upon my face after Mrs. Green uttered my name, was too much for her feeble strength. She almost screamed out the words, 'Michael Granly,' as she fell forward into my arms, sobbing 'Oh, my child—save—save—they tear me—wolves—Oh God!'——and Alida Blythe, with her arms about my neck—her head upon my breast, was,"——

"What?"

"Alida Blythe was in heaven!"

"Not dead! Oh, say not dead?"

"Yes, too true. Without a word, except that single one of recognition, and the incoherent raving that the wolves had destroyed her child, her spirit had gone to Him who gave it."

CHAPTER XVI.

Sad news—Letters and their answers—More villainy—Dividing the spoils—Wretched fate of Celestine—Facts leaking out—The convict's family—The Poor House, and how they were received and treated there—Disciplining a child—Cruelty—Temptation—A mother's love for her children—A bill of fare—Escaping from an American Bastile—Going back to "our old home"—Two sorts of children in one family—Commencement of the history of Luthella Brandon—Her new home, and life of a "poor-house girl"—Seven years of torture—Going an errand, and finding a friend—A Christian woman—A horrid sight—Capt. Sebring swears—Another phase in the poor-house girl's life—Her destiny linked with Celestine's—Good advice—Going out into the wide world among strangers.

"Poor soul !" said Mrs. Green, "she is gone, and minister not here to pray with her. I do wonder if she ever experienced a hope."

How much the mind of the old lady was relieved when she learned her true history. She evidently, though, believed her insane, and it did appear to Michael, that insanity was the only way of accounting for her presence in the situation in which she was found. He had not heard that she had left the valley, and knew nothing of Celestine being with her ; so he wrote there first for information, as well as to give the sad news of her death ; how he had found her ; how she died in his arms ; how she raved about her child being destroyed by wolves ; and finally, how he had carried her

body home, and placed it in the grave, surrounded by sad weeping friends, though no relative was there. When he got an answer to this letter, he wrote to Mrs. Brandon at M——, to know when Alida left there, and whether Celestine was with her, or what had become of the child. To this he got no answer. To another written to the postmaster, he got an answer from Risley, that Brandon's *woman* and her children were in the poor house. That the other woman and her child, went off with a dissolute young fellow, who, he understood, passed her for his wife along the road. The villain ! for he knew all the circumstances from Lafale's own lips, but like him was interested in keeping the secret. He was afraid that if Celestine got into the hands of the rich house of Yorkbridge, Field, and Granly, some proceedings in equity might be instituted against Brandon to recover the land bought with money which justly belonged to that child in right of inheritance, and for which he could never show that he had given an equivalent.

When Lafale and his equally guilty landlady heard of the death of Alida, they knew that they were accessory to it ; they felt themselves her murderers, and, like all guilty wretches, they at once resolved to add villainy to villainy, in hopes that the last would hide the first. To this end they opened Alida's trunk, and Lafale took the money, about one hundred dollars, and his guilty partner took the clothes and Celestine for her part of the plunder. The latter she stripped of her neat dresses, and clothed her in a "poor-house garb," and gave out that she was one of the children of that institution, forbidding her ever to speak of

her mother, or where she had ever lived, or what name she had been called by ; and thus for long years she made of her a menial servant, from which position she only escaped by stealth, when about sixteen years old, aided by a villain who promised her, that as soon as she reached Massachusetts, where he then resided, that he would make her his wife. Glad to escape from her present state of bondage to a wicked woman, she listened to the specious proposition of a still more wicked wretch, and went off with him. That he did not intend to keep his marriage promise, my readers will understand, when I tell them that that promise came from the villain Lafale, who had come into that part of the state to get girls to work in a cotton-factory, located upon the Connecticut, one of the most beautiful of American rivers. It was in consequence of this elopement that some of the facts already known to the reader, came to light. Mrs. Willstrain was so enraged at Lafale, and at the "base ingratitude of that vile girl, to leave her just as she had got big enough to do something to pay for her victuals and clothes," that she "let out" the long and well kept secrets. But it was too late now to redress her wrongs, though her friends tried to trace her, to save her from a fate inevitable to every girl who trusts herself in the hands of a libertine like the "very respectable, gentlemanly Mr. Lafale."

We must now go back to M—— to the late residence of poor Celestine's father, and see what has become of the convict's family, that we left in the poor-house, a home which the wretched mother thought preferable to the one offered her by Risley, upon terms which she rejected with abhor-

rence. But she had not then learned how some of the towns of a civilized, Christian country, provide for their poor. It is idle to attempt to disguise the fact, that many of the poor-houses, of this country, would be a disgrace to a savage nation. It is still more disgraceful, to a nation that claims to be so highly civilized as our own.

I cannot point out the locality of the one in question, because the mother and her children who suffered there, are still living, and I would not draw the curious gaze, upon what a proud world derisively terms poor-house children ; which I should do, in exposing the cruelties inflicted upon the poor helpless beings, through that long cold winter, which consigned their husband and father to the penitentiary, and the wife and children to the tender mercies of a wretch, who bids off the county poor, when put up at public sale, for the least possible amount, for which he can starve and freeze them through the year ; so that he looks upon every death as a clear gain, and every additional pauper, that falls in during the year, as upon a thief, who had come to rob him of a portion of his anticipated profits.

Almost the first greeting given to Mrs. Brandon upon her entrance into this—as she supposed, “Hotel Dieu,” or “*Hôpital des Invalides*,” was an inquiry as to what business she, a French Canadian —— (vile epithet,) had to our benevolence.

“However, if you stay here, you have got to go to work, I can tell you that—you won’t get a chance here to drive your husband to drink and stealing, with your laziness and extravagance.”

Could anything be more unjust—more unfeeling—more untrue? And what made it still worse, the words came from a woman, the wife of him who kept this house of refuge for the widows and fatherless of the land; a man who speculated in the hunger and nakedness of the poor.

What could the poor woman do? She was not lazy—and was willing to work to support her children, but her situation was intolerable. Her food the coarsest, and her labor incessant, and her children almost starving and neglected, and if she complained, she was told to “shut up—they fared better than the brats of a state’s prison bird deserved: and that if they died, so much the better; they would not live to be like their father.”

The youngest, a delicate little girl two or three years old, soon sunk under such treatment, and ran crying after her mother. The keeper bid her go about her business and she would soon stop her squalling.”

“But the child is sick.”

“I don’t care,” said Mrs. Stoneheart, if she is, “she is not going to disturb the whole house. It is a pity she was not dead, if she cannot keep still.

With that she caught the child by one hand, and a switch in the other, and commenced beating the poor thing unmercifully. What mother could bear this? Not hers, for every blow went to her own heart, and she ran to snatch the poor little sufferer from her tormentor, but without offering to lay a hand upon the woman; yet she began crying murder as loud as she could bawl, and when assistance came, declared that Mrs. Brandon had taken the child away by

force, and threatened to kill her. Upon that, they seized and hurried the poor mother off to the dungeon in the cellar, telling her that the stubborn will of the ugly little French brat should be broken, if they had to break its neck, and "that they would teach her how to interfere with the discipline of the institution." Day after day, that child was cruelly whipped within hearing of her mother, because she was sick, and pining after her mother's care and affection.

The other two children only fared better, because they were older, and a little more easily overcome by starvation and the lash.

The mother was at length released from her cell, where she had been obliged to sleep on a little straw, without covering, except one old dirty quilt, and obliged to endure effluvia and noisome damps, that could not be avoided. She was let out "on condition that she would behave herself in future, and go about her work without grumbling, and take care to mind her own business, and not meddle with the children of the establishment." She mildly remarked, "that she never had interfered with any but her own."

"Your own! just hear a state-prison felon's mistress, talk of her own children in the poor-house. If you wanted the management of your own children—the dirty bastards—what did you come here with them for? Nobody asked you to come. If justice was done you, no doubt you would be with your *man*, for nobody believes you were ever a wife. You got him away from his own wife, and then when she came for her own, turned her out doors, to perish in the woods. And now to talk about your own. When such folks get in the

poor-house, the state owns their brats, and will take care of them. Go to your work. Don't look at me that way again, you impudent hussey; and if you give me any of your jaw, I will have you tied up for a dozen on the bare back. I am not going to try to manage this house without discipline. Be off, and don't let me catch you looking at or speaking to them children you call your own."

She went away thinking; "Have I come to this? Have I lived to be called such opprobrious names, without daring to resent it, and told not to speak to my own children, or show resentment when I hear them continually called a horse-thief's bastards? Do I hear this every day, and live? I cannot, will not, endure it."

Murder was in her heart, and with such provocation, if she had killed, would it have been murder, or merely the act of a frenzied mind?

In this state of mind, the tempter came again, in the form of Risley. He pretended to be excessively sorry for her sufferings, and renewed his offers. "My wife," said he, "is now hopelessly insane, and I have a large family, and cannot take another wife while she is alive, or I would gladly marry you. What will you do?"

"What shall I do? I cannot go; I cannot, will not stay here. I had rather die—would die, but for my children. This place is worse than the penitentiary."

"Come with me, then, back to your old home. I am living on the farm. Will you?"

"Will you take my children?"

"Certainly, if you go, that is if you wish it; if you are

not afraid of mixing them with mine. You wouldn't like to leave them here?"

"No, no, no, not here. Anywhere, but here. It is the only thing, that will make me consent to take such a step—it is for my children only."

"Then be it so. When will you go?"

"Now ; to day ; this minute."

"Then you shall."

No prisoner ever escaped from the penitentiary with more thankfulness, than Mrs Brandon did from this home of the poor ; where the inmates were literally starved into submission to their cruel fate. Think of such a bill of fare as this in a land of plenty :

For breakfast, a pint of barley coffee, sweetened with cheap molasses, and colored with milk, with a slice of coarse wheat bread about three-quarters of an inch thick, and five inches across each way, with about two ounces of refuse salt pork. For dinner the same fare except the coffee ; and for supper the same sized slice of bread and something called tea. Its flavor was that of bog hay. If potatoes or other vegetables were cheap enough to substitute for the other food, they were occasionally given as a change ; but it often happened that no change occurred for months.

Of course, a good many were always in the "hospital," where they got, instead of salt pork, a pint of soup, made by boiling one beef shin, in fifteen quarts of water, in which a handful of Indian meal or bran was sometimes thrown. The bread was made of wheat flour, for that was a regulation of the overseers of the poor, who let them out to the keeper

to board at forty cents a week, the overseers furnishing house and bedding, such as it was. Nothing was said in the "regulations" about the quality of the wheat, and so that which was sprouted, musty, or weevil-eaten, that could be bought for half price, was the kind used, and the bread was often only half baked, and sour enough to curdle milk. If any complained, they were told to go, as no one compelled them to stay. It was an object of the keeper, to get rid of them as fast as he could, for his pay counted through the year upon the number he commenced with ; so that all that went out by death or otherwise was profit, and all newcomers, loss.

Reader ! be charitable. Lay your hand upon your heart and see how it beats, while you condemn Maria Louise, for leaving such a home as this for another one, upon any terms that were offered her. While telling me her story a few months since, she said :

"I could have died willingly if I had been alone ; but to see my children starved to death before my face, and whipped for crying for food, was too much for human nature to bear. I would have run away, but I could not go and leave them, and they would not give them up, because I was strong and able to work and more than earned my own support and theirs. I was fed extra, because I had not strength to work upon the 'regulation allowance ;' but I was forbidden to share my food with my children upon pain of having them shut up in the dungeon, out of my sight. If I had escaped I should have been brought back, for that was one of the regulations, and part of the contract that

the keeper should have the services of all the able-to-work paupers, and that the overseers should not discharge them, during his year. It was therefore a sort of special favor to Risley, that he was allowed to take me and my three children back to my old home, where I had been both a happy and miserable wife to a dearly loved husband, and now I had come to be a guilty wretch, rather than see my children die, or suffer worse than death in an American bastille.

“At first I was comparatively happy in my new situation. I was kind to his poor afflicted wife, who I found confined to an uncomfortable room, hopelessly insane. I was a mother to her neglected children ; the younger portion of whom loved, and the older ones hated me, because I occupied the place of a mother. I soon found that mixing two sorts of children did not answer. Mine were called young horse thieves and poor-house beggars, and told that their father, was a state’s prison convict, and a drunkard. Who made him so ? I could not tell them, ‘it was your father.’

“Finally, when it became evident, that there would soon be three sorts of children in the same house, I consented that mine should be bound out, upon condition that the oldest of his should also go away from home. It was another sore trial. My life has been full of such. I know that I have done wrong ; but let those who would condemn me say what they would do ; what I should have done. I was the mother of three dear children—I am the mother of six. I was the abandoned, poverty stricken wife of a man who took the first rudiments of drunkenness and crime in his father’s distillery, which he improved in the trade of a smug-

gler, and finished as a tavern sot, and tool of bigger knaves. For many years, I did not know how he had been betrayed, or that I had taken his guilty betrayer to my arms. It was not my will, but a cruel fate, that made me what I was. I did what my soul revolted at. Now both Brandon and Risley are dead, and I am doubly a widow. I know I have done wrong.

“May God and man forgive me, as I forgive others.”

Reader : Is there any unforgiveness in your heart ? Root it out, for you have more yet to forgive of man's wrongs to his fellow men. Of the three children thus severed from their mother, I have only to trace the history of one. The son, like many others of the “bound-out” class, found plenty of hard work, and hard fare, but the hardest of all was to be continually taunted with being the son of a prison-bird ; a horse-thief ; a counterfeiter ; a poor-house pauper ; and other opprobrious epithets applied to his parents. From this he determined to escape, and did so, followed by the usual advertisement of “ONE CENT REWARD, for an indented apprentice, about twelve years old,” etc.

But he went beyond its reach, working his way by a sort of American instinct, to the West, until he reached the state of Pennsylvania, where he hired himself to a farmer, and served him faithfully so many years, that, like Laban, he gave him his eldest daughter, and at his death, the bulk of his property, and he is now one of the most respectable farmers of that state, and an ardent supporter of a law to prevent the greatest cause of crime and misery. He is also strongly opposed to “poor-house regulations,” and the sale of

paupers to the lowest bidder ; those who are objects of public charity, he would support at the least expense to the public, but never allow them to be starved to death for the benefit of the contractor.

The youngest child of Nat Brandon, was marked out by relentless fate for a sufferer. In the fits of inebriation of her father, she was an object of hatred, because she disturbed him, no matter whether by crying or playful prattle. In the poor-house she was the weakest and most helpless object for tyrants to wreak their vengeance upon. In her new home, in consequence of previous abuse, and ill health, she was peevish, and for that was scolded and irritated by all above her, so that her mother was the more willing to part with her, since she was not only unhappy there herself, but the cause of a great deal of unhappiness to others. The woman who proposed to take her, stipulated that she must be given up entirely to her, because she wanted to treat her exactly as though she was her own, and have her grow up to feel that she had no other father and mother, or brothers and sisters, and then she would be contented. It would have been a hard task a few months before to Maria Louise, to part with her children, particularly the youngest, but now she felt the necessity, and rejoiced at the opportunity of finding, "one who would be a mother to her ; one of such standing and high reputation, that she felt pleased to think that fortune had at length smiled upon her."

The new home of Luthella, was about twenty miles from her mother, with but little intercourse between the neighborhoods, so that she seldom heard from them, and then always

that, "Ella was very contented and happy, and very fond of her new mamma."

Mrs. Flint took good care that she should retain no memory of anything connected with her former home and friends, except the horrors and starvation that she endured in the poor-house, so that by contrasting her present situation with that, she might think the last was better than the first. She soon began to feel that she had no other home, and perhaps did not know that there were any better ones—in time, she began to realize that none could be worse.

For seven years she slept upon rags for a bed, with rags for a covering, and a bag of wool for a pillow, in the garret, where she could scarcely stand erect, and where, if it had not been for her bedfellow, the cat, she might have been eaten by animals that her best friend kept away. Though pussey could drive away the rats, she could not rid the place of smaller vermin, that sucked the blood of the poor child every night. For seven years Luthella never knew the luxury of a clean sheet, and pillows. Her dress by day, was her bed-gown by night. She crept up a ladder in the dark, and lay down upon her rug on the floor, wrapping the old quilt around her, as she lay curled up in the least possible compass, to keep her from freezing.

Mrs. Flint's discipline for children, consisted in the liberal use of the rod. Her arguments were, a word and a blow, the latter generally taking precedence. The slightest disobedience, or direliction of rules, or even accident or misfortune, such as breaking a dish, or having her milk-pail upset by a vicious cow, was sure to bring the rod, cutting the deli-

cate skin of the helpless child, till the blood marked the stripes on her back, or fragile limbs.

"Often," said she to me, while relating the incidents of her life, "have I scaled the beams of the barn, at the risk of my life, or tore my flesh in the briars, hunting for hens' eggs, because my mistress had promised 'to give me a good dressing down,' if I failed to bring her a given quantity; and well I knew that such promises were always kept, while all her promises of rewards, were as surely broken. I have been whipped as a 'lazy slut,' for not bringing eggs when I had done my best to find them, until I could scarcely crawl up to my bed, if such a thing may be called a bed, and then because I sobbed, and groaned, in my miserable sleep, was whipped again in the morning, 'for disturbing the house;' and in one case, hit with a piece of iron, that inflicted a ghastly wound on my head, leaving this scar, which laid me up for some days. For this act of cruelty, Mr. Flint undertook to say a word in my behalf, but his wife told him, 'to shut up, and mind his own business, and let her manage her own affairs.' It was necessary, she said, to beat me within an inch of my life, or there would be no living with me in the house—that I would do nothing only as I was driven to it. He replied, that I always did everything he asked me to do, and he never beat me. That, she said, was just what spoiled me; and if he wan't so easy, and always speaking good-natured to me, and making me feel above my business, she should not have half the trouble to manage my unruly temper.

"It was quite accidental," said Luthella, "that I over-

heard this conversation, but I was accused of listening, and as a matter of course, in the state of temper Mrs. Flint was in, I did not escape a terrible infliction of her rod. It was the last feather that broke the camel's back, and this broke her power over me. I had often thought of running away, but I had now got to be so big a girl, that I was afraid and ashamed to go among folks with my bare head and feet, and ragged, dirty dress. All that was decent to wear, such as I was clothed in to go to meeting, at which my mistress was a regular attendant, and I an occasional one, was taken away and locked-up, as soon as I reached home. It happened the next morning after this last severe beating, that I was sent in a hurry to a neighbor's house, and without thinking of appearances, Mrs. Flint told me to run in a hurry, and go quick, and go just as I was, and not stop to get the old shawl, usually put on to hide my miserable dress, and more miserable person.

"The morning was very cold, and frosty, and my bare feet tender, and my limbs, so stiff and sore, that getting over the half mile to the house where I was sent was a severe job, and I arrived crying bitterly.

"Mrs. Sebring did not know me ; she had never seen me, of late years, except in my tidy garb at meeting. She had heard that Mrs. Flint did not use her bound girl well, but she thought it was all scandal. She was a very kind-hearted, good woman herself, and could not conceive how one in her own likeness could ill-use a child, particularly a 'poor-house child,' as I was always called.

"I did my errand at the door timidly, to Capt. Sebring,

and was about to hurry off as fast as I could run home, when he said, 'Stop, child, go in and warm yourself, you look half frozen.' I tried to get away ; I was ashamed to have his boys and girls in their neat, clean dresses, see me in my miserable dirty frock ; but the good man took me by the hand, and led me into the house, and two or three of the children jumped up simultaneously of their own impulse, to give me a seat by the fire.

" 'Dear, me,' said Mrs. Sebring, 'what a miserable little beggar-girl you have brought in here among the children ; are you not afraid they will catch something ?'

" 'This is no beggar-girl ; it is the one that lives at Mrs. Flint's, mother,' said Lafrasia, her eldest daughter.

" 'What—Flint's bound girl ? Do you live at Flint's ? What is your name ?'

" 'They call me El—I believe it is Ella ;' said I trembling like a culprit, as the old lady took hold of my arm to try to make me look up in her face. My back smarted with my last beating, and I felt the wound open afresh at the thought of how I should be whipped again because I stayed so long.

" 'You believe it is Ella ; poor girl, have you forgotten your name ? It is Luthella Brandon. Don't you remember your mother, poor thing, and the name you was born to bear ?'

" 'There was something in that name that awakened a tender chord of my heart, and as it thrilled through me, seemed to carry me back to the time when I was fondly pressed to that mother's bosom, and I burst into tears.

Mrs. Sebring drew me towards her and I sunk my head down upon her lap to smother the sobs that I could not suppress, for I felt as though I must not utter them, if I did, I should be beaten for 'disturbing the house,' as I had so often been before. It seems that as I stooped forward, my frock opened behind, and showed the stripes of my latest cruel whipping. Lafrasia was the first to see it, and as she did so, almost fainted at the sight. She was so affected she could not speak, but pointed to my back. This drew the attention of her mother, and the other children, and Mrs. Sebring unbuttoned my frock—I wore no other garment—and there was my back a gore of blood, where it had trickled down from the blackened stripes, and dried upon the skin.

"The mother and every child burst into tears. Capt. Sebring, usually the mildest of men, did not cry. Capt. Sebring swore. Mrs. Sebring said,

"'Why, father !'

"Capt. Sebring said,

"'Well mother, what is it ?'

"Mother mildly said,

"'She shall stay here.'

"'Stay here,' said Capt. Sebring, with another pretty strong word, for he was very angry, "stay here ; that is what she shall. I would sooner throw a child into a den of hyenas, than let her go back there. If she is a hyena herself, she shall not be flayed alive. I never saw such an awful sight. It is equal to what we read of among the slaves.

“‘I suppose,’ said Mrs. Sebring, ‘that we ought to inquire whether she deserved punishment.’

“‘Deserve punishment!’ said the captain, ‘no child ever deserved such punishment. We never have punished our children with a blow of a stick in our lives, and few children are more obedient. I think this is about the hardest punishment they ever had, to look at what they have seen this morning.’

“‘Indeed it is, father,” said Lafrasia, putting her arms around his neck, and kissing him, ‘but I hope all of us will be better for it, and love you the more, to see you take the part of the abused one, so earnestly. I never heard you swear before, father.’

“‘My dear, forgive me, but I could not help it. Go, take the child, and see if you can’t find some better clothes for her, and let us see how she will look decently dressed.’

“‘Stop a minute,’ said her mother, ‘I want to ask her what she could have done, to incur such a terrible infliction of cruelty. Will you tell me the truth, now, like a good girl, as you look as though you might be?’

“‘I took her hand in both of mine, dropping upon my knees and looking up in her face, said, just what in my heart I felt :

“‘I will tell you the truth. If you will let me stay here, and won’t let me be whipped any more. I never will tell you a lie, and I will be a good girl, and I will love you—if you will let me.’

“‘Then tell me who whipped you, and what for you were punished.’

“‘I did so truthfully, and she then said, there, that will do

now ; you may go with the girls, and they will look up some of their old dresses, for you for the present. You need not be afraid that Mrs. Flint will be after you, Capt. Sebring will see to that.' ”

Capt. Sebring did see to that. Mrs. Flint stormed and threatened. Capt. Sebring was calm, and mildly proposed to submit the case to the grand jury and the court. Mrs. Flint upon that hint, thought best to keep quiet ; contenting herself with tearing up the indentures, and telling him “ now he had got the poor-hotise brat, he might keep her ; for her part she had been tormented long enough with her wicked pranks—she was glad to get clear of such a wicked young imp of Satan.”

Capt. Sebring replied ; “ Mrs. Flint, whenever you want to see wickedness, you need not go farther than the looking-glass. But I am not going to quarrel with you. Good bye.”

It was a long while before Luthella could be prevailed upon to divulge all the cruelties to which she had been subjected, and not till she had left the neighborhood to live with Mrs. Welldon, a widow lady, a relative of the Sebrings, who resided some miles nearer her mother. She had been often told, that if she ever told one of the neighbors anything about her treatment, that she should be strangled in her sleep, and for months after she left, she used to start up in the wildest alarm, dreaming that her time had come. Her new home was a perfect contrast to her former one. She was treated like a human being, and not as a brute. She was sent to school, and obtained as good an education, as usually

falls to the lot of scholars in a new country log school-house. With the development of the intellectual faculties, and the influence of social friendship, and embellishment of good apparel, came personal beauty, and at fifteen, she was not only good looking, but smart and ambitious to do something for herself. She had learned something of the history of her family ; had visited her mother, but it was not home there. The new brothers and sisters looked upon Luthella as an alien, and their father was not her father ; while his children looked upon all the children of Maria Louise, as interlopers upon their rightful domain. They did not take into consideration, that the property more rightfully belonged to her and her children, than it did to Risley or themselves.

Luthella heard the history of her half-sister, Celestine, and felt a sort of romantic interest in her.

“It seemed to me,” said she, “that in some way my destiny and hers were linked together. There was a strong impression upon my mind, that we should yet meet, and love each other ; but when, where, or how it was to be brought about, I had not the most distant idea. It only seemed to me it was to be so, and I dreamed of the possible way it would be accomplished, time after time, but every time different from the preceeding. Sometimes she was sick, and I nursed her with a sister’s tender care ; sometimes she was drowning, and I rescued her at the very last gasp of life ; sometimes she was followed by wolves, such as I had heard were the immediate cause of her mother’s death, and often these wolves wore the countenances of men. I felt myself

drawn irresistibly toward this poor girl, without being able to tell why, until it became a sort of diseased state of mind, that I could not endure. I finally began to feel as though I must not sit still any longer, without an effort to shake off this delusion of the mind, for I could not believe in the possibility of ever having any of my childish dreams realized, for I had never seen Celestine since I was old enough to remember her, and should not know her, though I met her every day, changed as she might be from the description given me of her face, and personal appearance, by my mother. Yes, there was one mark, the scar of a burn upon one of her hands, which took the form of the initial letters of her name, remarkably distinct. Yet how likely that I might pass her, or sit for a whole day by her side, without thinking of such a mark, or noticing it, even should it not be covered with a glove. I finally argued myself into the belief, that a recognition of my lost sister, would be a thing almost impossible, and that it was a preposterous phantasy of the brain, that I would not think of again. But I was not satisfied in my present position, though my mistress, or benefactor rather, had been, and still was, like a mother to me. I wanted to be more independent ; and, must I acknowledge it ? I wanted to escape from a neighborhood where I had been pointed at as the child of a father who died in a state-prison. I wanted to go where I never should hear of the shame of my mother. While in this state of mind, an agent came into the neighborhood, soliciting girls to go to Massachusetts, to work in a cotton factory. Every feeling that I had lulled to sleep about Celestine, waked into life at

the very sound of factory-girl, for that was where it was said she had gone. I asked advice of my friend, and she said, 'Go, and may God's blessing attend you, and the wish nearest your heart, be crowned with success, for I know it is for your sister, and not for selfish motives, that you are expatriating yourself from your place of nativity, and going alone, unprotected among strangers. But you will find no difficulty, if you will always remember that you have nothing to depend upon, but virtue and honor, and that the least spot, or tarnish upon their escutcheon, can never be effaced. You will meet with sore trials and temptations, but if you resist through all extremities, you will be rewarded at last.'

"With this advice of Mrs. Welldon, and her blessing nestling in my heart, I turned my back upon all acquaintances, friends, and enemies, and, a poor, helpless, delicate girl, not yet sixteen years old, went away alone in the wide world, among utter strangers."

CHAPTER XVII.

The journey—Peering into strange faces, in search of a lost sister—New home—New scenes—New friends—Luthella meets a wolf in her path—Familiar things in every-day life—Scandal and scars—The spy-glass and the spy—A new friend and a new cause of tears—Another journey—The stage coach—The wind and autumn leaves—Reveries—the stage horn—A vision of Celestine in the clouds—Oh, my Sister, speak to me—The vision fades, and reality appears—The glove—The scar—The recognition—The curtain falls.

It might have been thought by one who could not understand her motives, that Luthella was a very rude girl, from the way that she peered into the face of every girl she met, whose age, complexion, color of the eyes and hair, compared with the picture, engraven upon her mind, of Celestine. But with all her searching, she found no one that filled that description. Of the hundreds of those with whom she came in contact, in her new occupation, she met with no one who had seen or heard of the lost one ; and at length, amid new scenes and new excitements of her hitherto monotonous life, she ceased to remember that such a being had lived. At any rate, it was with her as with most of us, we forget those absent as we do the dead, for others nearer, and still more near and dear friends. It is no wonder, then, that Celestine passed into forgetfulness, for the living monopolize

the place of those in the grave. Let us then follow the fortune of the living.

Luthella was industrious, quick to learn her new duties, was esteemed by her co-laborers and employers, and was contented and happy, for months, but it did not last. The wolf was in her path.

One of the employees of the same company where she was engaged, though much her senior, was still young enough to pass for a gay young man, had attached himself to Luthella soon after her arrival, and to her seemed a most devoted lover.

It is idle to say that she was not proud of the attentions of so handsome a man, who seemed jealous of the least attentions offered her by any one else. He walked with her, talked and sung songs with her ; took her out riding ; waited upon her to evening parties, and neighborhood visits ; and, above all, was equally attentive with herself upon religious worship. It was in vain that older girls told her that he had done just so for years, to every new comer with a pretty face, and that he had no design of marrying her, as he had led her to believe ; though perhaps he had never declared in so many words, that was his purpose. She could not believe the tale told her upon promise of secrecy, by one of the girls who pretended to be her friend, that he had a wife living in Rhode Island, who had left him and gone back with her little girl to her father's house, because her husband had seduced a beautiful young girl that he brought from the state of New York, to work in a cotton factory under his charge. She was, she told him, a poor helpless

orphan, who he should have protected, and not ruined, as he did by promising her marriage. I know," said she, "that he is a villain."

"Then why," said Luthella, "why not denounce him?"

The reason came out at last, that in telling of his villainy with another, she might also criminate herself. This in the eyes of Luthella, was sufficient reason why she should not believe the story. "Probably, thought she, it is only because she is jealous, and wants to get him away from me. I will not believe that any man *can* be such a villain."

Poor, unsophisticated country girl! She was sixteen then; she is older now, and probably can believe that a man may swear eternal love, honor, truthfulness, and virtue, and still be all that her companion truthfully represented her lover to be. She could not believe it then; she was fascinated, and day by day the serpent was drawing her nearer and nearer within the charmed circle. Every art that he could devise to render her an easy prey when he got ready to strike, was resorted to, as much as possible without exciting her suspicions. If he had been content to wait the slow process, by which many a poor bird has been allured till it dropped resistless into the serpent's fangs, he might have succeeded; but he was unwilling to wait, and the scales fell from her eyes; the charm was broken; visions of hope and happiness dissolved like a mist, and she stood alone again without a friend in the world; those who were yesterday jealous of her, hated her to-day.

What for?

Because he had not accomplished just what they had

prophesied that he would, or because, by her threats to denounce him, she had driven "one of the nicest young men in the village" away from their society.

Life now had lost its charm, and though she had done one of the noblest acts of her life, she found that she was the object of suspicion, and the target for their shafts of slander. Busy tongues of scandal said :

"Ah, she puts on a great many airs of virtuous indignation, but if the truth was known—well, it's no use talking—But I guess that—don't you think so, Lizzy Jane?"

"Indeed, I do ; I think just as you do about the matter. No doubt he went off to get rid of marrying the proud, stuck-up thing. The idea of her trying to captivate a man so much older than she is. It is shameful, indeed it is. Don't you think so?"

"You may bet on that, and she not a year here yet, and to be carrying on so. I should like to know where she came from, for I never could get her to tell who her father was ; only that he is dead ; or where her mother lives, or anything about herself ! And so I don't think much of her, anyway you can fix it ; that I don't."

"Nor I either. But that is nothing to what Fred Willfred—you know, my Fred, as the girls call him—told me, but that is a secret. You won't tell any one, will you, if I do tell you ? Well then, you know she never would go in bathing with any of us girls, but sneaks off alone down to the girl's bathing-ground. So Fred—you know what a mischievous fellow Fred is—he thought he would find out what it was for, and so he climbed up into one of them sycamore

trees with a spy-glass, and would you believe it, he says 'her back is as striped as a garter-snake, where she has been licked ; and when the skin is wet and cold, the colors come out on the old scars as plain as a rainbow.' Now you must not tell this, 'cause the girls would be mad enough to murder Fred, if they knew that he did such a thing, and the overseer would discharge him ; but don't you think that she must have been tied up to the whipping-post for stealing, for it don't stand to reason that her mother, or anybody where-she has lived, if she has been a bound girl, could mark up her back in that way. I can tell you, I shall look out for her light fingers."

"So shall I."

"Now you won't tell, will you?"

"Oh, no, not I."

No, she did not tell of the mean act of the young scamp with his spy-glass ; but she did tell that "Luthella was a thief, and had been convicted and whipped for it, and that she carried the marks upon her back, and that was the reason that she would not sleep with any one, and was always so careful about letting anybody see her undressed, and that was why she never told any one where she came from, only York state, or where her friends lived, if she had any. And, for my part, I don't wonder that her beau ran off and left her in such a hurry, if he got a sight of her back."

This vile story was confirmed by a similar one from Lizzy Jane ; and finally, Fred told some of his associates what he had seen, "as a good joke."

Poor Luthella ! she found that virtuous conduct, if "it

will win at last," did not always meet with a ready reward. First, her boarding-house keeper told her that she wanted her to find a new place, without assigning any reason, except "that the girl that used to occupy that room, was coming back, and wanted it ; and as Luthella was so mighty particular about going in with other girls, she could not keep her any longer."

The truth was that there was an unquenchable curiosity to get a sight of the scars of those cruel stripes, which if seen, would be proof positive that she was a convicted thief, and had been whipped at the public whipping-post.

If such barbarity was ever justifiable as a punishment of the culprit who stole a coat, or loaf of bread, in his straits of necessity, how much more should it be inflicted upon those who would rob an innocent girl of her only treasure—her good name.

This is no fancy sketch, of what might have happened in some far-off barbarous country in the dark ages, but a relation of what has transpired within a few years, in a manufacturing village near the banks of the Connecticut river, through which as the wayfaring traveller passes on his tour between the American seat of learning and the great emporium, he exclaims, "what a sweet village, and what a host of happy girls !"

There was one that was not happy. Luthella had escaped one destroyer of innocence, to fall into the hands of others, who of all the world should be its protectors. She was scarcely recovered from the shock she felt at the discovery of such baseness in one she had begun to look

upon not only with eyes of friendship, but love, when she found herself turned out of house and home, for hers and all the other boarding-houses in the village were closed against her. The truth is, she was proscribed by the most tyrannic power on earth—public opinion—and the decree of banishment had already gone forth. In her extremity, she sought a private interview with the factory agent, who proved to be *a man*, not merely an animal wearing his likeness, and to him she told a part of her truthful story, which he believed ; but, as he said, she might just as well undertake to turn back the current of the river, as to stem the torrent of calumny setting against her.

“ You had better go away.”

“ So I would, but where shall I go ? I have no home, no friends, I am alone in the world.” And she burst into tears. Such tears—tears of real distress in a woman—a young girl—always touch the heart. The agent said kindly :

“ Don’t cry. I will be a friend to you. Can you do house work ? Yes, very well, a friend of mine who keeps a public house in the town of C—— wants one or two girls to wait on table and do light housework. I will give you a letter to him, and you will get the situation, and good wages ; and if you know of any other girl that would like such a place, you can get it for her, only don’t take any of our factory girls ; I can’t spare them, and would not part with you, under any other circumstances, for you have been a very industrious, good girl, and on that account, besides the balance of your wages, I will make you a present of this.”

“ And with the letter of recommendation he placed in my hands a ten dollar bill. I lost no time,” said she, “ in getting ready for another journey, and in two days, I was on my way with a light heart, and I have no doubt smiling face, to the town of C——, by a conveyance that we now look upon as a sort of relic of a by-gone age, when people did travel by stage coaches.

“ At the town of N—— the stage stopped, and I had to wait some hours at the hotel, for another one that would take me to my destination. It was a gloomy autumn day, too early to have a fire ; too cold, to be comfortable without one. The clouds were hurled about in the atmosphere, and driven into all sorts of fantastic shapes overhead by the constant blowing, ever-changing wind. The beautiful tinted maple leaves, came down in showers from numerous trees that some benefactor of his race had planted along both sides of the road. Now they represented a flock of wild birds in the air—now they flew down and danced a cotillion or country dance in the road, to the music of the wind, as it sighed through the old stone walls upon each side. Then, just as though they were tired with this saltatory exercise, they went off and laid themselves down in the little nooks and corners by the road-side, or round the corner of the barn, where the old sow with her young family was busy converting the late representatives of birds and dancers, into feathers for their bed during the frosty night that instinct told them was approaching.

Now for a little space all was calm, and the sun's rays lay along the hill so sweet and warm, that I longed to go and

sit awhile under the side of that steep rock, in sight from the parlor window.

“But these calm spells were of short duration, for I had scarcely resolved to go out, when a fleecy cloud came up rolling over the distant mountain top, shutting out the sunshine, and then came the wind again, screaming like old Pan with his pipes, and then down flew another flock of maple leaf birds for another dance in the road. Oh, it was a charming, fascinating sight, and I sat hour after hour, gazing from my window, completely abstracted from the world of humanity around me. For months I had forgotten Celestine, as much as though she had never lived. What mysterious influence brought her again, all at once, before me, mixing up her face and form in the fantastic shapes of the clouds, and dancing leaves? It seemed as though she came on the notes of a far-off stage horn, as it carolled upon the wings of the wind from among the rocks and woods of the mountain road, by which the western stage was rapidly approaching. This was to be my conveyance to my new home, but as it would wait dinner, I could still enjoy for a while longer the fascination of my reverie among the clouds, stone walls, dusty road, maple trees, dancing leaves, not forgetting the rural feature of the pigs by the barn. What were stages or stage passengers compared to these, particularly as the form of my lost sister grew more and more distinct. I could see the bonny brown locks of her hair hanging in curls upon her neck, just as they had been described to me, years before. Her cheeks seemed a little sunken, and not so rosy as I expected. The thought came and went like a flash, ‘she is

no longer a rosy-cheeked little girl, she is a mother—perhaps she has such a little girl as Celestine was in days passed away. No, she has not, for there is a whole cloud of flowing crape spreading over and wrapping her in garments of mourning, but it does not hide her eyes; they are as bright and as blue as ever. Oh how they look down upon me, from their spirit home in the clouds; how their glances go like electric sparks down into my heart. What is it? What spirit influence overpowers me? Where am I? I was conscious that the stage had driven up to the door, and that some one had got out and come in the room, for I heard the rustle of her silk dress, but I could not withdraw my eyes from the vision in the clouds, for I thought it the angel form of my sister, and I was now sure that that was her resting-place, and not this earth. Yet it seemed to me that the rustling of the dress I heard was her dress. Oh, how sweetly she did smile upon me, as she seemed to be fading away in the sky. I could not bear to have her go, and not give me a word of recognition. I felt that I should know her voice, and I cried out, speak to me, one word, Oh my sister, Celestine, speak to me.

“‘Well, my dear, what is it? Are you dreaming?’

“I sprang to my feet, and rubbed my eyes. Was I dreaming! That form; those eyes; the curly locks of brown hair; my vision was before me. It was not in the clouds; it stood there flesh and blood like myself, in the same room. And I cried out, Is it real? Speak again.”

“‘Well, what shall I say? Do you know me? Poor girl.’

“She spoke the last words to her own heart, but they

came distinctly to mine. She thought me insane. That voice ! I knew that I should know that voice, though I had never heard it except in my cradle, or in my dreams. I felt that I could not be deceived ; but I would be doubly sure. I stepped forward, and said ; ‘ My dear, will you let me see your hand ; the other one ; may I remove the glove ?’

“ ‘ Yes, certainly. Well, what do you see ? Do you know me ?’ ”

“ ‘ The hand was soft and warm. It had not come cold from the grave to mock me, and there was the scar ; faded, to be sure, but it was there, and I pressed it to my lips. ”

“ ‘ Do I know you ? Yes, yes, yes. Do you know *me* ? Do you know your sister, Luthella ? Yes, yes, you are my sister, Celestine Brandon.’ ”

“ ‘ It was not a dream ; I had seen a vision ; but I felt the reality now, and emotion overpowered me, and I fell fainting in my dear sister’s arms.’ ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

The sisters meet and love each other—The story of Celestine's wrongs—May heaven forgive—The ride to C— by moonlight—New England scenery—Quilltings—Apple-parings and huskings—The old red house and the school-house—The village—The green—The church—The tavern—The drive along the Mill-brook—The old bell, and its tones—Arrival at C— —Hotel loungers—Virtuous indignation, and its results—One false step embitters life—Reminiscences of childhood, and recognition of childhood's friends, and a scene of death, that would draw tears from a stone's heart.

“HAD I been dreaming ! was I dreaming still ; I was not, had not been asleep, yet what a dream. I lost my consciousness for a moment, when I saw the same face that I had seen in the clouds—saw it now, bending over me as I lay upon the sofa, just as I had seen it pictured upon the firmament, and now, as then, I expected every moment to see it disappear. I even feared to breathe, lest the wind should drive the thing of vapor from my sight. I thought that it was an ethereal essence—a thing of air—a cloud—or else in the moment of my unconsciousness, I had myself become ethereal.

“As it does in a dream, how my mind did wander, and my imagination condense days and years into a single moment. How intently I did gaze into the face of the vision—my spirit sister ; for I expected every moment that it would

fade away, as it did in the clouds, until I began to feel conscious that it was a reality, and I drew her lips to mine, and kissed them, and she returned the token of love, so warm and full of affection, that I cried out :

“ ‘ Oh ! then you are my sister, Celestine Brandon !’

“ ‘ Yes, yes, your sister, but not that name. My mother gave me the first, and I have disgraced it—disgraced her. The other was my father’s ; and criminal as he was, I am not worthy to wear his name ; I should give it a still darker hue. Oh ! Luthella, you do not know the leper that you embrace. You must not call me sister. You are pure, I am vile. Lost, lost, lost !’

“ She burst into a flood of tears, sobbing as though her heart would break.

“ ‘ When she grew a little calm, I said :

“ ‘ But you are my sister—child of a mother wronged by my father, and if others have wronged you, or if you have wronged yourself, I will not forsake you. That unseen spirit that guides the world, has led me on for years—has pictured you in my dreams ; has painted you upon the clouds to make me know, and love you, and now I have found you, and I never will part with you, till death parts us. If you have sinned, all I have to say, is, ‘ sin no more ;’ and as I would be forgiven, so I forgive you, and pray that God may be to you, and me, equally merciful. I have only one question to ask ; are you, or have you been, wife or mother ?’

“ ‘ Neither ; but I should have been the one, before I was the other ; and better that I had been in my grave, before I saw the author of my disgrace and ruin. He was the cause

of my mother's death, the cause of an age of slavery to my young years, and of worse than death to me. But I was young, foolish, flattered, and deceived, by his most solemn promise of marriage, and I fell the victim of a wicked seducer. But that is no sufficient excuse for me ; and though you forgive, I never can get my own forgiveness ; and I know the world ; and I fear heaven has closed the door of mercy upon me, a poor, unforgiven wretch.'

" ' No, no, no. Heaven never closes the door of mercy. It is always open to those who truly repent, as I believe you do. It is only those who need Heaven's forgiveness, just as much as you do, that are unforgiving. Let us look into our own hearts and see if we too are not, or have not been, unforgiving too. Our own sex is generally the most uncharitable toward one who has by any chance, whether misfortune, error, sin on her part, or actual seduction on the part of another, forfeited her claim to the name of maiden.'

" ' Oh, Celestine, how I wish I could speak to all my sex—to every young girl—to tell her to keep watch and ward for ever over the greatest earthly treasure she will ever possess—her virtue. Once soiled, it can never be re-polished. But believe me, my sister, I will not condemn, I will love, cherish, and comfort. We will never part.'

" ' Oh, Luthella, you do not know how much you promise. You have seen so little of the world, that you do not know that a girl who has met with the misfortune that I have—and as true as I live, it is nothing more—I am the victim of man's false promises, just as my mother was, and I am not the guilty wretch that many would believe me ; but still,

contaminated as my name is, I am liable to lend a dark shade to yours. It seems to me, that I cannot escape any more than Cain could from the mark fixed upon him, to mark his crime. Oh, who can tell, what I have suffered? I have repented my folly, and prayed God's forgiveness, and frequently think I have that, but my fellow creatures drive me to despair.'

"I used all my arts to soothe her, and was partially successful. I longed to ask her one more question, but hesitated long; for a strange suspicion came over me, that I knew her seducer, and had felt his power—his winning arts—and his revenge. She told me, that go where she would, where unknown she might strive to hide herself among strangers, till by repentance and good conduct, she could win a good name, that he followed her with a demoniac spirit of revenge, telling tales of her own, or her father's disgrace, till she was tired of life, and was now actually bent on destroying, or hiding herself in the oblivion, and perhaps poverty and disgrace, of some great city, for she was in utter despair of finding a place of refuge in the country, and she had no means of living, no friends, and knew not a single relative in the world."

"Then you shall come with me, and we will live together; and young as I am, I can shield you from the shafts of malice. I will be your sister, and my love shall be your refuge. Come, you are my sister; lost, but found.'

"Then I never, never will give you cause to disown me, or love me less.'

"Our ride to C—— was one that can only be appreciated

by two loving sisters, under just such remarkable circumstances, upon just such a beautiful moonlight evening in autumn, such as can be seen in all its loveliness, only in New England. Nowhere else can such a moon light up such scenery. Such quiet old farm-houses, with their blazing kitchen-fires. In one of these we saw a scene worthy of long remembrance ; yet it is one so common in the farm-houses of this dear land of the Pilgrims' homes ; where their sons still live, and from one of whom I am proud to think that I am descended in a right line.

"Our driver stopped in front of one of these old mansions, to water his horses at the well by the road-side. Through uncurtained windows, we could look into the great kitchen, and see the original of the term, "family circle," as it was drawn around the great stone fire-place, where a pile of wood blazed high upon the hearth, sending its bright glow all over the room and out of the windows across the doorway, till it lighted up the road where we sat admiring the scene ; a scene that no one that was born in a New England farm-house can think of without emotion—without an increase of happiness.

"Upon one side of the fire-place sat an old couple, apparently four-score years old. The old man is dozing in his arm-chair, and his old partner is busy with her knitting-needles upon a pair of red-striped woollen mittens, for the ruddy faced boy that looks inquiringly in her face, as though he were saying, 'Are they most done, granny?'

"In the opposite corner there are two or three little girls, pictures of health, dressed in home-made linsey-woolsey

frocks, and each wearing stockings made by their old grandmother's ever-busy fingers. .

"At one end of the long table on the back side of the room, the mother of those children is making bread, while her oldest daughter washes the supper dishes at the other end.

"In front of the fire there is a busy group, consisting of the father and half-a-dozen boys and girls.

"It is a family apple-paring ; it is a scene so common that it is scarcely noted by those who dwell where it is frequent.

"To me it was not so common as to be uninteresting. I could have sat there until that fire had burnt out, and then pictured the same scene in the glowing embers. It was the picture of a happy group in the abode of industry and contentment.

"How my heart did yearn for such a home ; such a peaceful mode of spending my life. But we had to turn away and leave this scene, but only to look upon others equally pleasing at almost every house we passed. In one there was a quilting—an old-fashioned quilting, where a score of girls were in the full tide of enjoyment over their labor, which will soon be terminated, and then the boys will come in, and there will be a merry time at old-time plays, still common in this Yankee land.

"A mile further on and we pass one of those great barns, so common upon every farm in all the Eastern States, with the smooth sod of "the meadow lot" coming close up on one side, and there upon the grass are great piles of Indian-corn, and there is a laughing merry group of boys and girls upon one side, stripping the husks and tossing the ears over the

heap, where they glitter in the moonbeams, or look like gilded arrows as they sail through the air. By and by the huskers will all go in by another great kitchen fire and eat apples, nuts, and pumpkin pies. By ten o'clock they will all be in bed, and oh, how sweetly they will sleep after such an evening's exercise in the open air, and how ruddy they will look, and how strong they will feel in the morning, when they get up at daylight to resume their autumn labor.

"But we drive on, and leave this farm scene, and now we meet another. Here comes a boy from the mill, mounted on horseback, with two or three great sacks of meal; and there toils a yoke of tired oxen, with a load of cider from yonder press, where men are turning down the screws for the last squeeze to-night. There's a couple of boys playing see-saw, across the garden fence, and here race a brother and sister down the lane, from yonder red house, to see which will get first to the road, and carry back the newspaper that the stage-driver will toss them, as he whirls by.

"There is a scene, that will be recognized by many a native of this soil. It is one I doubt not, as common as the husking, apple-paring, or quilting. It is one, that sends a thrill of pleasure to our hearts, as we only catch a glance as we pass, yet that glimpse tells the whole story.

"What is it?

"It is only a young man, stopped as he passed along the road, in front of this house where he is leaning over the gate, talking to his sweetheart, who ran down from the well, when she heard him whistle. How the old lady will scold because she is gone so long after water. She forgets that

she promised this girl's father, forty years ago, over that same gate, or at least one that hung between those same stone posts ; for they have stood there through several generations, and if they could speak, what tales these stony hearts could tell, of the hearts that have pledged their love to each other, just as those two hearts are now pledging theirs, leaning upon the 'front gate.' Both are in their every-day working garb, and both form a picture of rude health, and a pleasing scene in rural life.

" Ah ! there, I thought so—the mother is getting impatient at the long delay—the door opens, and there is another pleasant picture. The old lady, candle in hand, stands in the door, and calls, ' Lucy, what in the world keeps you so long—have you tumbled down the well ? ' Lucy answers ; ' No, ma'am ; ' and her mother replies, ' Then do come in, I am waiting for the water. What are you doing down to the gate ? Reuben is there, I'll warrant. I never saw the like on't, of the girls now-a-days ; it didn't use to be so when I was a gal."

" The candle blinds her so, that she cannot see beyond its rays, notwithstanding the bright moon, or she would know whether Reuben was there or not. We can see her, in her neat white cap, and home-made check apron, and tidy homespun woollen dress ; and beyond her into the house, where her husband sits by the fire, shelling out a bushel of corn, that somebody else that rides in the stage to-morrow night, may meet with another boy coming from the mill, in the same manner as the one we have just passed.

" Now Lucy says ' I *must* go ; good-night, Reuben—will

you be over, Sunday night?" We could answer that in the affirmative, for instead of saying good-night, he says, 'Lucy,' and she turns back, and then there was a sound somewhat like the snap of our driver's whip, but it was not that—the sound came from the gate, and then Reuben said, 'good-night, Lucy.'

"And then we drove away from this pretty moonlight scene to look at another, and another, continually changing, though ever-like, ever-pleasing, fascinating, absorbing, so that the traveller thus interested feels no fatigue.

"And what traveller that ever thinks, ever travelled along a New England road, past farm-houses, mills, meeting-houses, school-houses, villages, or amid the scenery of hills and mountains, such as loom up where Mount Tom or Holyoke point their heads to heaven, or where the Berkshire hills shelter valleys filled with as excellent a population as ever dwelt amid just such scenery, without thinking how pleasant it is to dwell here amid such hills and vales, and among such industrious, sober intelligent people, who have all the requisites of life to make a country full of happy homes?

"No doubt, these that we are passing are so, and here is one of the requisites to make such a population happy, because it makes them intelligent. An exclamation from Celestine tells what it is ; for she says,

"'Oh, there is the school-house !' Yes, there it was, at the corner of the road, fenced out of the field by a bend in the stone wall. It was painted red once, but that was a long time ago. It was a rough-looking seminary of learn-

ing, but it was one that many a man in far off lands can look back to with pride as he contemplates the elevated position he may be called to fill in consequence of the education obtained in just such a rough-looking old school-house by the side of some Connecticut or Massachusetts country road. Beyond the school-house is an orchard, and there is another cider-mill, and there goes another cart-load of cider down the lane and out of the bars between the old grey stone walls.

“Now we come to a little village—a real New England village—there on the left hand, as we enter, there is another school-house, lately painted red, all but one end, which was left till the painter had time to finish the job. That was a year ago ; it may be another before he finishes it. Beyond the school-house is a pond, occupying about one-fourth of the public square ; which by the by is a triangle ; and beyond the pond stands the meeting-house ; a plain, square frame, two stories high, with a square tower projecting out from one end, supporting a bell, over which is a cap that looks for all the world like a hay-cock bottom up. Right in front of the meeting-house, across the square, lay four or five generations, sleeping quietly where those white marble and dark slate-stone slabs glisten in the moonbeams. Just beyond the graveyard, is the great square, one story, gambrel-roofed village tavern, and beyond that the store, post-office and blacksmith shop.

“What a strange old custom it was that located these last homes of the dead, amid the homes of the living. Here they were, generation after generation, some with old moss-grown stones, that would require some Old Mortality to

decipher their time-worn inscriptions. Some with new marble that had not yet lost the polish of the stone-cutter, and now shone in glistening white lustre as they stood like sentinels amid the scarcely discernible stones of grey slate, big and little, black and white, old and new, all intermixed and spread about over the whole acre of land allotted to the village burying-ground. What a queer taste, or rather want of taste, in the manner this ground is fenced. A stone wall, built of cobble-stones, surmounted by posts and rails ; and the entrance, that stands right in front of the church, is closed by a common set of farm-yard bars.

“Of course there is not a shrub, or tree, within the enclosure, and if there was, the sexton’s sheep, and old grey horse, would break them down, for he uses the grave-yard as a common pasture.

“Thank Heaven, in some places, this old style has given way to the march of an improving race, and the dead are now placed at rest in the most lovely spot in the whole town ; not as here, in the very middle of a busy village, surrounded by dwellings, and work-shops, upon every side, but away in some shady dell, or gently sloping hill, amid a world of trees, and shrubs, and water, peaceful to the dead, and attractive to the living.

Now we increase our speed, and rattle along by the silent graves with noisy wheels, and pull up at the village inn. And now, as though on a race for life, comes all the world—that is, the world of that village—running to the post-office, for they have heard our driver’s horn—the same horn that blew me visions of Celestine’s image over the hills,

a few hours before, and now it blew to them visions of news from absent friends, and news of the last election in some distant State, vastly important to village politicians. How the old Squire is beset with questions, as he hauls over the papers of the mail, with his great round iron rim spectacles upon his nose, to know whether John Smith or Amos Cook is elected to Congress, from some far-off region at the West. No wonder at the anxiety, now that we catch the words of gratulation at the confirmation of the rumor, that the latter is elected. Amos is the son of an emigrant from that town, and his election reflects honor upon one who got his education in that old red school-house.

“We sit, Celestine and I, the while in the ‘best room’ of the house, upon wooden chairs bottomed with flags, by a wood fire, in an open fire-place, on a sanded floor. That, instead of a carpet. Every now and then, some village beau comes in, looking about as though for some acquaintance, but in reality, to see two strange faces, that somebody may have called pretty. Now we are off again, and as we roll along the bank of ‘Mill brook,’ with here and there a moonlight glimpse at the water, between the apple-trees, the tones of the bell, up in that steeple, ringing as it has for the last century at nine o’clock, come along down that valley over our heads, in such sweet music, it is no wonder that the sons of that land, however distant they roam, long to come back again once more to hear the never-forgotten music of the old bell, pealing over the hills and vales; nestling in soft echoes down among the rocks, where sleep their sires in the old village church-yard.

“Scarcely had the music of the old bell died away on the calm night that followed that blustering day, when the stage horn rang out upon the clear, frosty air, and we rattled into the town of C——.”

Oh, New England ! dear land of happy homes. It is no wonder that thy children love thee, and never forget such scenes as these so faintly pictured in the moonlight, yet still so vivid, that many a voice will exclaim, as tearful eyes scan this page, ‘I know that spot.’

How many will start at the tones of that old bell, as on some spirit wings they are borne to them, perhaps across the sea—perhaps over the Alleghany, or Rocky mountains, till they are heard again upon the bank of some new ‘mill brook,’ where the oak fills the place of the old apple-tree, and where the school-house is built of logs, and the grave stones in the village churchyard, do not glitter in the moonbeams, but the stumps do.

How many too will hear again the peals of that stage-horn, and think back to the village tavern, and the post-office, and the old postmaster, and the anxiety of the crowd for ‘news by the mail.’

How many will remember to have seen just such a crowd of impertinent loungers as Luthella describes, staring at every face that arrived by the stage. But let us go on.

“There was a crowd of idlers as usual upon the steps of the hotel, watching who should come in the stage. As I was getting out, I heard Celestine say, ‘Oh God ! Lafale here. I did not then know what it meant, and as she hurried past me into the house, I had no time to ask for

explanations, but hurried after her, and was about entering the door when a hand was laid upon my arm, and a voice said :

“ ‘Do you keep company with such girls as that ? Do you know what she is ?’

“ ‘Yes, I do : she is the victim of a vile seducer—a villain, who, notwithstanding he had a lovely wife, sought the ruin of a poor, unprotected orphan ; and when she afterwards fled from him, followed her with the malignancy of a fiend to blacken her character, and drive her to despair and death, as he did her mother. Not content with one victim, he sought, by the same means, to accomplish the same purpose with her unprotected sister. Do I know what she is ? Yes, sir ! And who she is ? She is my sister—long lost, lately found sister. And you, I know who you are—you are George Lafale, that very villain.’

“ ‘I spoke this with a clear, full intonation, before all the crowd. I cannot tell how I had strength to do it, but something prompted me thus to denounce and expose the guilty wretch, and he quailed under the effects of such scorching words of truth.’

“ ‘Celestine stood just within the door trembling, and said, as I entered, ‘Oh, Luthella, how could you brave that man ; he is so vindictive, he will ruin us both. I cannot stop here. His presence will blast me. What shall we do ?’

“ ‘She was answered by a lady,

“ ‘Don’t be alarmed, my dear ; your sister has served him right ; she is a noble, good girl, thus to unmask the impostor, who has been making propositions of marriage to my

niece. He shall leave the town this night, or go to jail in the morning. I owe you a thousand thanks.'

"She grasped my hand and pressed it warmly, and said, 'She had no doubt I had spoken the truth, and that should not injure either of us with any but the vicious.'

"I had given my letter to the landlord as I got out of the stage, and he came in now, and greeted me, and shook my hand as cordially as though I had been an old friend; and as he did so, said:

" 'Mrs. Smiley, this is the girl that Edwin wrote to us yesterday would be here to-day. If she can work as well as she can talk, I think you will like her. I wish you had heard what she said to Lafale.'

" 'I did, every word, and I believe it is all true.'

" 'And so does every one, and I have no doubt it will clear him out of the place, for I saw him talking to the stage-driver, I presume to get him to call for him at ten o'clock, when he goes out. And so, this is your sister. Does she want a place?'

" 'Yes, if I stay, she must. I have not seen her till to-day, since I was in my cradle, and do not intend to part with her until one of us may be cradled in the grave.'

" 'Good girl,' said Mrs. Smiley, 'you shall both stay as long as we like each other, and I hope it will be a great many years before you are parted again. Come with me, and get some supper. You must be tired and hungry. Mr. Smiley, you tell John to take the girls' things up to the room next to ours.'

"How happily our first day terminated. Here we lived

two years, contented and almost happy, for we were respected by all who knew us, except those who were vicious themselves. Occasionally our feelings were lacerated by some insidious remarks, which came like the storm-fiend shrieking upon the wind to our ears, to make Celestine's heart bleed. Lafale took care to keep away, but he wrote back to some of his old associates, 'That those two girls were both bad, and that their father was in the state-prison, or else, if he had got out, he was a poor, miserable vagabond, and both of these two girls' mothers were the wives of this state-prison convict; and an abundance of such scandal, which although not exactly a lie, was equally as slanderous, for it was told to injure two poor helpless girls.'

"Busybodies often came to Mrs. Smiley and told her she ought not to keep such characters in her house. At any rate, she ought to turn the oldest one off, for they did not think it was right to harbor a girl that had done as she had.

" 'And what would you have her do?' said Mrs. Smiley.

" 'Well, I don't know, that is her business. But she must be a low creature, any way, if half is true that folks say about her. But what can you expect? for they say her father and mother were both dreadful low people.'

"These things affected Celestine seriously. She often said, that it did seem as though it was no matter how much she tried to be good now, that one false step of her life dragged her down and made life burdensome; and I could not hide the truth from myself, that the time was fast coming, when I must part from this dear, good girl, upon

the edge of the grave. I had often urged her to write, or let me write to those dear old friends of her mother, Dr. Field, or Mr. Granly, to let them know what became of her ; but she said 'No ; it is better that my name be for ever unremembered, than be heard of coupled with disgrace. If I had never met with misfortune, there is no man that I would sooner see than Dr. Field, for I remember the time when I used to climb on his knee, and put my little arms around his neck, and call him papa, and kiss him, as though it was only yesterday.'

"It was only the next day after this, that she went in the dining-room to wait on a couple of travellers, who called for dinner. One of them looked as though he might be the father of the other ; he was a noble-looking grey-headed gentleman, between fifty and sixty years old, and the other not over half that age. From the manner of the younger, and the conversation of both, it was evident that one was a physician and the other a minister.

"Celestine came out directly and said to me, 'Sister, I wish you would go and wait upon those gentlemen, I cannot stay there ; it seems as though that old gentleman, that the other calls doctor, would look me through and through. I never saw such eyes before ; they fairly magnetize me ; it has made me faint. What can he mean ? Oh dear ! Is my shame written in my face ?'

"I went readily to take her place, and woman-like she stood at the door, I suppose, to hear what might be said. As soon as the doctor saw it was not the same girl, he called me up to him, and said in one of those mild sweet voices, that

always charm ; ‘ My dear, who is that girl that just went out ? Will you tell me her name ?’

“ I thought I would evade giving her name, and so I answered :

“ ‘ She is my sister sir.’

“ ‘ Your *own* sister ?’

“ ‘ Yes sir ; though only what is usually called, half sister. ‘ He laid down his knife and fork and looked at me so earnestly, as he said :

“ ‘ And her name ——— is ———’

“ His eyes seemed fairly starting out from their sockets, so intent was he upon the answer. I heard the door move behind me ; I knew who was there, and I knew that the questioner was not one who inquired from mere idle curiosity ; and besides, I had a sort of prescience of who it was that addressed me, and I answered ;

“ ‘ Celestine——’

“ ‘ Brandon,’ added he, springing to his feet. There was a scream at the door, and Celestine sprang forward, saying, ‘ DOCTOR FIELD, Oh ! save me—I am dying—’ as she fell in his arms—as I thought fainting.

“ The name, the singular and unexpected meeting, the start, the scream, the recognition, all came so suddenly upon me, that I was for a moment stupefied with amazement. I could not move. The young man was almost equally excited, but he ran to her, seized her hand, and said ; ‘ Celestine, my dear cousin, speak to me. Have you forgotten your little play-fellow, Blythe White ? Look up. Oh ! doctor ; she has fainted !’

“I ran to her with a glass of water, but the doctor motioned me back, as he spoke : ‘ It is too late ; kind words or deeds are of no avail ; Celestine Brandon is in heaven ! ’ and he raised her head to show us that his bosom was drenched in the warm current of her life, that had gushed from a broken blood-vessel, and killed her as instantly as though her heart had been penetrated by a musket ball.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Terror of death—She died young—The death scene—Thus to die—Woman's calmness—The mourning train—The cemetery—The spot for the grave—The sermon—The text—An impressive lesson—Floods of tears—Luthella meets a foe—Threats of revenge—Luthella's path beset—Return to her native place—Slander and suspicion—Sickness—Want and suffering in a garret.

THERE is a terror in death, to all civilized beings, unless their sensibilities have been blunted, and de-humanized, however mild the form in which it approaches us, that we cannot shake off—cannot conquer, however brave we are. It is no mark of manhood, courage, or high moral feeling, to pretend that death has no terrors—that we can witness it in others, or expect it ourselves, without fear—without trembling—and, when it comes in blood, without horror. Blood too, flowing from the heart through the lips of a young girl, of perfect form, and lovely face; Oh, how terrible! How the heart sickens, and the mind revolts, and eye turns away from the crimson flood that saturates the white linen, and runs down in a pool at her feet.

Can the mind imagine a more sickening, soul-sickening sight, than such a girl, with her white garments drenched in blood, resting in the arms of a stout man, himself all gory, as though he might have been her murderer—as

though he might have just plunged the dagger to her heart, and while he withdrew it, held his victim in his arms, with her soft blue eyes upturned appealingly to him, as when her lips uttered the words, 'Oh save—save me—I am dying !'

It was too late !

Celestine Brandon, whatever her faults had been, was in heaven, for she had lived and died a humble penitent, trusting in a merciful God.

To save, or call her back, was indeed too late.

No skill of her skillful friend, although he would have given his right hand to save her, could make her pulse throb again.

No earnest appeal from her childhood's playmate, and relative, to speak one word of recognition, can encourage that stiffening tongue to move. True, her eyes seemed fixed on each, and all, but 'tis death's vacant stare, and it lights not the soul.

The piercing screams of her loved sister—Oh, how loved ! cannot pierce her dull ear.

It is closed to all earthly sounds, but may we not hope it hears the voice, and music of angels. Yes, we may hope that Celestine Brandon is in heaven.

SHE DIED YOUNG ;

SHE DIED FORGIVING ;

She died hoping to be forgiven.

Let that be her epitaph. And in the grave let her find a peaceful rest.

Oh what a scene was her death. Luthella's screams aroused the house and neighborhood, as though the air had been electric wires, that telegraphed the news abroad.

With what hot haste men came, prepared to meet a mortal foe.

They came not prepared to meet the one they saw—the foe that wields the scythe of Fate.

How the women came running, just as they left their occupations, some with the marks of labor—one fresh from the kneading-trough, where she made her bread—some from the toilet, half-dressed, stopping not to consider, and take one more look in the glass, to see that each hair was smooth, and cap aright.

“Some came with a babe drawing its life from the maternal breast, while the mother looked at death—terrible, blood-stained death.

Some were wild with alarm ; some were faint at heart ; some were calm, and courageous ; all, full of eager curiosity.

Mrs. Smiley was like a summer morning—calm—cool—and prepared to do a woman's duty to a woman's corpse

She only stopped to inquire :

“Is there no hope?”

“None.”

“Poor Celestine—thus to die. She was a gentle, good girl ; let us bear her gently to her room. Stand back?”

This was said to the crowd, now filling up all the room.

“My daughter, take Luthella to your room. Doctor, you assist me. Let us carry the body up-stairs. Mrs.

Johnson, get one more, and follow—no one else. Mr. Smiley will attend to all that is requisite. Sarah, have this blood removed immediately. Come?"

And she led the way, to make preparations for the last act of respect that we can pay the dead, or honor the living.

Perhaps no "servant girl," ever had such a funeral as poor Celestine. The manner of her death, of course, had something to do with it; but there was a more powerful motive than that, she was no longer a poor, despised drunkard's daughter, full of faults of her own; "No better than she should be," but the great-niece of old Parson White, who was born in that town, and the cousin—the acknowledged, much-loved cousin of the "Reverend Blythe White, jr." grandson of that good old parson, of whom, and his powerful efforts in the cause of religion and temperance, everybody had heard. And then she died upon the bosom of the great, the rich, Dr. Field, who wept over her as though she had been his own child. Things certainly wore a different aspect, and yet the poor girl was no more worthy of being followed to the tomb by a great concourse of people, than she would have been three days before, when she might have gone the same road without disturbing the current of industry by the poor hearse and single mourner. The one carriage from the hotel would probably have followed the hearse that carried, as would have been said, "Nobody but one of the hotel girls." Now, every vehicle from far and near, seemed to have come to fill up the line that stretched a mile in length along the road.

It is not worth while to stop the mourning train to inquire of one and all, what motives brought them from their town or country-houses ; whether it was to pay respect to the dead, or to do homage to the powerful and rich, who unexpectedly came to follow their poor friend and relative to her lonely grave.

We need not inquire into the secret motives that animate human nature ; they are much alike in all ages of the world.

Perhaps there is no part of the world where so many of the resting-places of the dead are located in really lovely spots, as in New England ; and in one of the most lovely of these rests Celestine Brandon.

What a contrast, between this, and the one described a few pages back. That, in the heart and bustle of a noisy village ; this, a mile away from the outskirts of the town. That, a bare knoll of gravel, too poor to bear grass, except as it is fertilized by bodies made of dust, resolving back to native elements ; this, a hill, a glen, a stream, a plain a wood-land, sandy knolls, and rugged rocks ; a barren and a fertile slope ; a shady nook and sunny glen ; all in one combined.

No Mount Auburn, Greenwood, or Laurel Hill, affords more romantic places ; more fascinating, more charming spots for graves, than the cemetery of the town of C——. Or if the reader choose, the town of S——, for I shall not give the precise locality, so as to enable any idle inquirer to pry out some of my living characters, or find the tomb of the one that is dead.

I can only say it is a charming spot, and I wish the country had many more like this, and many less like that seen by moonlight in the last chapter.

"It was a delicacy worthy of the man," said Lnthella, "that prompted Dr. Field to select a spot for the grave, under just such a row of maples, as the one I described to him, where I had that heavenly vision of my sister. A few steps from these, lay, in its beautiful stillness, a deep pond, and beyond, high, rugged rocks, covered with dark evergreens. It was a place for meditation for the living, as well as quiet repose for the dead." Her pastor had preached such a sermon as seldom falls to our lot to hear but once in a lifetime. His text was, "As ye would that others should do unto you, so do ye unto them." He acknowledged her errings of life, but dwelt upon the fact of her deep repentance, and, as he trusted, forgiveness of God, and he hoped, also, by all who felt the force of his text. But as if to make it still more impressive, when all were gathered about and ready to fill up the grave, he took a spade in his hand and said :

"Let him that is guiltless, cast the first stone."

He then offered the spade to one and another, and said :

"Will you? or you? or you?"

It was a strange sight, and deeply impressive. It was a mild, mute way of teaching a great lesson.

It had a great effect.

There were few dry eyes, but there were many sobbing women, and strong men, as well as children, wept.

You might have supposed that the aching hearts of a multitude, with grief oppressed, were breaking. I have never seen a more solemn funeral service, or one more or better calculated to do good.

It made us all thoughtful—all convinced that we were not guiltless—not prepared to cast the first stone.

No one seemed willing to receive the spade from his hands, and he threw it upon the ground, saying :

“I cannot assume the responsibility of doing what I have proposed to you, for I am not free from sin. I need God’s forgiveness and mercy, as much as this poor sister we have just consigned to the grave. I cannot say, ‘I am better than thou art,’ and, therefore, worthy to cast this earth upon all that remains of earth, of one so late a living being like one of us.”

There was a little pause, and a stillness so solemn that I am sure it must have touched the heart of every one that wept as a mourner about that open grave. At length Dr. Field stepped forward and took up the spade, and as he did so, said :

“Neither can I, nor any one here, for no one is guiltless in the sight of the Lord ; but we must do our duty to the dead, asking his forgiveness for our sins of thought, word, or deed, and that, in all things, we may hereafter be better able to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. As none of us can, upon these terms, cast the first mite upon the breast of our dear sister in the grave, let us all unite in doing a part of this last duty, and sad token of respect, for a departed friend.” He then cast in a spadeful, and gave the

spade to the next, and then all pressed forward to share in the work, and, by that little token, acknowledge that they had not always done unto others just as they would that others should do to them. Perhaps no grave, was ever filled by so many hands—perhaps no tenant of the tomb ever had more tears shed around her by strangers, than were shed at the grave of Celestine Brandon.

It was a singular coincidence, that this was the anniversary of their meeting, and that the day was just such a one as that when the maple leaves came down and the sisters met two years before; and that the leaves danced in the road, and whirled all round the grave, just as they did before Luthella, upon that day; and if she could have dried her eyes so as to look up, she would undoubtedly have seen the same angel face in the clouds, for it was there, full of smiles, as hers was full of tears.

When Luthella turned to leave the grave she encountered one face that bore no marks of grief; it was probably the only one present. He had felt the words of the text most forcibly, but they had turned to gall in his heart—the heart that throbbed in the miserable body of George Lafale.

Every other soul had profited by this solemn scene, perhaps, but this one. His was the soul of a heartless seducer, hardened by his long years of crime, till his conscience was seared as with a hot iron.

He had not come to repent and mourn—he had come to sin.

He had never been content, while he thought that Luthella had escaped his toils, and, in spite of her denunciations,

would at any time have crept fawning at her feet, so that he could have won from her a single smile. He had made repeated efforts to see her, or get a chance to speak with her, but never before had so boldly thrust himself into her presence. He probably thought that she would not dare to spurn him before so many, and at such a time, upon such a spot, and if she did, he swore in his heart that he would have revenge.

He had often threatened it before, and at one time, had laid a deep plot to get Luthella out into the country, to visit a sick friend, where he intended to call for her, with a tale that Celestine was dying, and had sent for her, and, once in his wagon he would have her in his power, and had determined to upset her and take her life, as by accident.

How often Providence watches over and guards us.

On his way to the place, he upset himself, and thus frustrated his wicked scheme.

Then he disappeared, for a long time, from that part of the country. Now here he was again, with his snake-like eye bent upon her.

As she walked away from the grave, leaning upon Dr. Field's arm, Lafale pulled her sleeve and said :

"Luthella, will you speak to me?"

"Never—villain."

She only heard the smothered word, "revenge," as she hurried away from his hateful presence.

The fact that he had returned to C—— filled her with apprehension ; and she felt that now her guardian angel was gone, and that the destroying angel was besetting her

with his toils and his malice. She knew that it was no longer safe for her to remain, and she determined at once to take a course that she had been thinking of since Celestine's death. The sight of Lafale determined her. She knew his threats, and she dreaded him as she would a basilisk in her path. Dr. Field and young Blythe urged her to go with them to Vermont, but the desire to return to her native place over-ruled all other considerations; and thither she went immediately. She was received there with all the respect that she could claim, for all were strangers to her. At her mother's house it was not home, and she sought work in the hotel at the village—now grown to be a place of some importance; and, as a matter of course, the people thought it about the most respectable in the world, and very jealous of any taint upon their escutcheon.

At first Luthella was received into "the first circle," and she was treated as a pious, virtuous girl, however poor, should always be treated, with respect due to character not to wealth.

In her intercourse with others, she was extremely reserved, because she did not wish to tell the story of Celestine's life and sad death.

Her reserve was called pride, and then scandal-mongers began to pull her down to their own level. They called her haughty, and soon began to whisper among themselves, but loud enough for the gossip to hear, who would carry the news to her, that "her father was a felon, and her mother the woman that Jim Risley took out of the poor-house."

"And what has she to be so proud of?"

"Nothing but her fine clothes."

"Yes, fine clothes, indeed ; and how did she, a factory girl, get so many fine clothes ?"

By-and-by they found out—or thought they did. The evidence was good enough for those who breakfast, dine, and sup upon scandal, and make their bed upon ruined reputations.

A letter from an anonymous assassin, post-marked C—, Massachusetts, came addressed to the postmaster, which stated that the writer felt it to be a duty to inform the people of M—— "that a girl of very bad reputation, who had been stopping at a hotel in that town, had left very suddenly, without paying her board, and had taken with her two trunks of valuable clothing, one of which, certainly, was not her own ; and that the writer had lately heard that she had been seen at a hotel in M——, and if the people of that town did not wish to have society contaminated, the sooner they got rid of such characters the better."

Was ever a bigger lie told in words of truth ? She had stopped at a hotel, had left suddenly without paying any bill, for she had none to pay. All the funeral expenses that were not given by the landlord were paid by Dr. Field. The trunk not her own, was her sister's. No one else had any claim to it. But upon this *ex parte* evidence of the perjured villain, Lafale, she was condemned at the bar of public opinion. It was too much for her constitution, and she sank under it. Even her own mother floated away on the current of popular prejudice, and left Luthella to linger for months upon a sick bed, alone among strangers.

While her money lasted, she was treated as sick guests of a hotel generally are—with cool neglect and large bills. When nearly out of funds, she had to give up her comfortable room, and was carried to a garret that strongly reminded her of the one in which she spent her childhood. Here she sold off article after article of her wardrobe, until, if she had strength enough to walk, she could easily start on a journey without any encumbrance of baggage. Her great anxiety was, not to get well, but to go back and sleep by the side of Celestine. Her physician, who had stood by her like a true friend, administering to her wants with his own hands, at her solicitation, wrote to C——, and got such testimony of her character as should have overwhelmed her calumniators with shame. Some of them did relent, and offered her assistance to go back ; and this revived her more than all the doctor's medicine. She said to her native town, " You have wronged me, but I forgive, while I shake off the dust of my feet, as I leave you for ever."

How much she suffered, during almost a year that she remained there, no one can tell. Suffered, too, as the victim of a vile, unprincipled slanderer, who had sworn to ruin her character, because he could not conquer her virtue. It is a sad contemplation to think that the world holds such black-hearted villains. But Heaven appears often to permit them to flourish for a time, and then cuts them off, in a manner that proves the truth of the text, " Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will have vengeance."

We shall see, in the next chapter, that He had not forgotten His declaration, and that, although Luthella had

suffered for a season, it was only to make her the more like gold purified in the fire. She is now upon her pilgrimage to her sister's grave, and while she journeys the weary road, let us stop by one of our wayside inns, for a night's rest and meditation upon the probable finale of our long story.

CHAPTER XX.

Arrival at N——The scene of the flight of leaves from the old maple trees, and vision of Celestine in the clouds—Another vision—Brandon Valley seen in a dream—Echo, and a warning voice—Offer of a ride—The mountain road and precipice—A terrible death, and mangled corse—The end of George Lafale.

It was the anniversary of the dancing leaves and flying clouds, when Luthella entered the town of N——, where she met Celestine, three years before ; but, unlike that day, this was as calm as the blythest morning of May.

How the same stage-horn rang out among the rocks, as she was whirled rapidly down the same mountain-side that Celestine was traversing, when her image was painted in the clouds, or in the mind of Luthella. But there were no clouds to-day, and no pictures but those of sober reality were anticipated. In fact, they were not anticipated before—neither are dreams ; yet, like dreams, unexpectedly came these day-visions. Not only unexpected, but unaccountable.

The old maple trees stood as green as summer. They had not donned their gorgeous autumn livery, and not a leaf came down to dance in the road. Inanimate Nature was still dressed in the livery of summer—warm, calm, lovely summer. Oh, that I could still the perturbations, she thought, of my beating heart, till it was as quiet as the

leaves upon these trees, that were dancing their wild gyrations when I was here before. How vivid that scene was now brought to my mind. It was almost a state of hallucination that carried me back to the time when Celestine came, not only in the clouds, but personally, in such a singularly mysterious manner.

"Personally, she can never come again ; and I have no satisfactory evidence of communication between living and departed friends.

"I entered the house with these thoughts upon my mind, and took a seat in the same room, by the same window, looking out upon the same scene, where I had before encountered things that belong more to dream-land than earth. I certainly did not sleep then nor now ; yet, you will say, as you read, that I was dreaming. There was a wonderful calm stillness, so in contrast with my former view from this same spot. Not a breath stirred the leaves. Presently, the old sow and pigs, the very counterparts of those I saw three years before, making a bed of the dancing leaves, came tearing along the road, each with a bunch of straw in its mouth, telling, as plain as words can tell, that a storm was approaching. Then, the leaves at the further end of the row of trees, began to move, and a whirlwind came roaring along the road, gathering up the dust, and spreading it upon the green leaves, and all along the grassy bank. Ah, well, but it will soon be washed off ; and then will come the frost, with its palette of colors, and then there will be another leaf-dance ; but I shall not be here to see it. Where shall I be ? Was it echo that answered,

‘Where shall I be?’ How could it be echo? I had spoken no word—there was no hill, or rock, or thing that could have sent back the word, if I had spoken it. Yet it came, distinct as ever came a warning voice from the spirit-land to human ear. I thought of Celestine, and of the strange things that I had witnessed once before on that spot. I thought then that I had a warning voice from the spirit-land; but I had not, for my sister then was a thing of earth—of flesh, and blood, and human heart, like myself. Yet there was between her and me some strange ærial communication, or some magnetic influence, by that subtle fluid of which we know so little, and which, because we are ignorant, we call mysterious. Then, as now, I could not understand my feelings—could not tell what I felt, or why I was so singularly affected. I thought, more and more, where shall I be, when the green leaves turn red, and purple, and brown, and come flying from their lofty boughs to earth. Perhaps not another day will pass till that time comes. Perhaps this very night, the north wind will sweep down from the bleak mountain-tops of the coldest region of snows, and to-morrow morning the frost diamonds will sparkle in the rising sunbeams. Then the leaves will die. And then, in a few days or weeks more, the trees will be bare; and then, when they are in their leafy graves, shall I be here—or there?

“‘Not there?’

“That voice again. Not there—not in the grave?

“‘Not in the grave!’

“‘Mercy on me, mercy!’ I exclaimed; no, thought—

for as yet I had spoken no word, and echo answered, 'Mercy.'

"Am I losing my senses—am I dreaming, or am I in some enchanted chamber, where spirits mock me, and make me tremble in their presence, when most I need to be calm !

" 'Be calm.'

" 'Yes, yes,' I spoke aloud, 'I will be calm ; for now I feel I can—I must. It must be that I am in presence of a spirit, but it is a good one—the spirit of my sister, Celestine.'

" 'Celestine.'

" Echo answered again.

"It was not a loud echo ; it was one of those soft, breathing sounds that come to the ear in our sleep, but it made me calm and happy. I even felt more cheerful than I had before for many months ; but I felt that I should soon be with my sister in the spirit-land. I cannot tell why, except that I did not wish to live, because I was alone in the world and so friendless. My health had been so long affected, that it had diseased my mind. I was not exactly gloomy and desponding, but I said so often, 'I do not care to live,' that I had come to think that I should not ; and now, the apparent presence of my sister, convinced me that I should soon be with her. I thought, she has come to accompany me on my journey to that unknown land. Again I went over and stood by the same window ; where all was sunshine a few minutes before, now all was gloom. Black clouds portended the storm that I had thought would bring the frost artist to

paint the leaves in their gorgeous autumn colors. I thought it portended the close of my summer of life.

"While I stood in a reverie of thought, gazing at the flying army of clouds, that swept down through the firmament from the Green Mountains at the north, my mind ran back over all the scenes of which I had been told so much, till I had a whole panorama before me of places and faces of those I had heard of, and, somehow, felt that I was connected with through Celestine.

"There was Brandon Valley, just as it had been described by Blythe White, who was a great story artist ; but the frost there, earlier than here, had put the autumn livery upon the trees. There was the great rock, and vine-clad tree, where Alida gave lessons that made a poor boy a great, good, and rich man. There was the old hemlock by the school-house, but the old log-building was not there—it had gone the way of all decaying things, and in its place was a neat, light, pleasant white frame building, a fitting one for a country school.

"Even the little church had grown into a stately edifice, with a spire and bell, of louder tone than that which told of fire when lightning struck the old distillery.

"The little nook in the corner of Deacon Brandon's field, where Alida's mother sleeps, had changed from a field corner, to a neatly-fenced, tree-planted, shady lot of grassy graves.

"And there was the old parsonage. What magnetic influence drew my mind to that ? Drew it so strongly, too, that I could not draw it away. It centered there. Why ?

Was it because I was indebted to one born beneath its old gray, mossy roof, for this enchanting picture? Yes, it must be so, for this vision was only the reflection of what that one had told me a year before, aided by a few outlines from the reminiscences of Celestine's young mind, with perhaps a slight touch here and there from hearsay talk of my mother.

"But I knew not what interest I had in the home of old Parson White, since I had no expectation of ever seeing one of its inmates again. Yet, turn whichever way I would, back came the unsatisfied eye to that house.

"In my dream—for so I called it—though fully awake, I opened the door and went in.

"In the great arm-chair, sat the patriarch of the flock; his locks as white as snow, and around him were two or three mountain snow-drops—things of beauty—things to love—beings that blessed the old man's life, and gave that heavenly smile to his benevolent face. These were Blythe's sisters—pure specimens of *Green Mountain Girls*. Their father, too, was there, in his garb of honest, productive, healthy industry. He was a Vermont farmer. And there was their mother. A real mother, such as children love.

"She was the Elithura of one of Michael Granly's letters; and one of the fruits of the good seed planted in his heart by the angelic Alida, was the transplanting of this fruitful tree, from her home beyond the lake, to this home here in this pleasant valley, where she had become the mother of three girls and a noble, pious son. But where is he? Not here. I strove hard, but I could not catch a

glimpse of his face, in any one of those pictures. Why was I so anxious? I cannot tell. I never had felt so before.

"Yet now I would have given mines of gold if they were mine, for one sight of his face. It would not appear. I was almost in despair, and then I had a gleam of hope. The door was opening, and I hoped that it might be him. No. But it was another dear, good friend—it was Dr. Field, his face glowing in health, and from his equipage, I could see that he was just from a journey. I tried to hear his words as he shook each one by the hand, and answered their eager questions. I could not catch a sound, but I knew he spoke of Blythe, and that he was away, and well and happy, for every time his lips moved, his words lighted up smiles of peaceful joy in those that heard, and so I felt content.

"How long I had been in this curious state, or how long I might have remained, I cannot tell, if some other influence had not come over me and roused me to life.

"I felt a painful sensation; just such an one as we may suppose is felt by the bird as he is drawn into the charmed circle of the serpent's fascination. I did not see, but I felt that I was gazed at by an evil eye, and like some similar affection when we are asleep, it awaked me, and as I started, I saw the form of a man walking away from before the window where I stood. I did not see his face, or hear him speak, but I heard a voice; the same one that I had heard before, and the words came distinct to my ear:

" 'Don't go with him.'

"What could it mean? I had certainly not thought of

going with him, unless it was the stage-driver, and, if so, why not go with him?

“ ‘Not go with him?’

“Echo was at work in my brain. I thought that my reason was failing.

“I sat down upon the sofa, to collect my wandering thoughts, and bring them back within my own control.

“I bent my head in my hand, and a voice said, as plain as ever voice spoke in my ear, ‘Don’t go with him!’

“ ‘Don’t go with him!’ I repeated, starting up; ‘Who spoke?’

“There was no one in the room—no one in sight. I stood with my back to the window, and the words came again, as though the glass had a voice, clear and distinct: ‘Don’t go with him.’

“ ‘Celestine,’ I cried, ‘are you here?’

“The window trembled as though some one was shaking the sash, and then all was still; but the words kept ringing in my ears, ‘Don’t go with him.’

“Who could it be, or what did it mean?

“I knew nothing then—in fact, know nothing now, of what the world has lately heard so much—of spirit influence. I certainly had not then—for they were unheard of—ever heard of a ‘medium,’ or table-moving, or raps, tips, knocks, or writing that conveyed the idea that a communication was made, or desired, between the things of air and earth. And what is perhaps remarkable, I have never to this day seen a single demonstration of the kind.

“In the visits of spirits to earth, I am no believer. There-

fore, this relation is not given to propagate a doctrine, but to relate a fact. I do believe that some minds, under peculiar states of the body, are susceptible of dream influences, without closing their eyes in sleep; and that warning voices do appear to strike the ear, while the mind and body are in such condition, just as they do in dreams; and faces and scenes are mysteriously exhibited to the vision, just as they are during the dreams of sleep.

"These words that I had heard, 'Don't go with him,' kept ringing in my ears, and I wondered what could be their meaning, or why I had heard them, or who was the person I was warned not to go with.

"I was not long in doubt. The landlord came in, and said a gentleman from C——, with a splendid buggy and fine horse, was going right over to C——, by the short road, and was very anxious to give me a seat, as he thought it would be much more pleasant than the stage, and he would get there some hours sooner. It was a tempting offer, but 'don't go with him,' was still in my ears, and I positively declined.

"'It was very singular,' said the landlord, afterwards, 'but he seemed determined that you should go with him. I do not understand it. I had to prevent him from coming in here, as he said you dare not refuse to ride with him; and he went off swearing that he would have satisfaction for the insult of your refusal. But the threat, perhaps, amounts to nothing, for he had been drinking. However, if it is anybody that you know, you may as well look out for, and avoid any insult, if you ever meet him again. Perhaps you never will.'

“He started, as he uttered the last words, and so did I ; for there was as clear an echo as ever rung along the mountain-side—‘ You never will !’

“ ‘ It is very strange,’ said he, ‘ I never heard an echo in this room before.’

“He spoke the last word full, but echo had gone—flown out of the window, probably, and gone back to the mountains—‘ to his own native home,’ where echo lives to mock the voice of man, as he sends it abroad upon the clear mountain air, among the rocks and hills.

“The man had been drinking—that easily accounted, to my mind, for his singular perseverance in his request that I should ride with him ; particularly as he was probably the same man that I saw before the window, where he had seen my face ; and thus, without any object on my part, I had attracted his attention and curiosity to become acquainted. But now he was gone, and I thought no more about the matter, except that ‘ Don’t go with him,’ was given to me as a warning, because he had been drinking, and, therefore, for me, was not a fit companion.

“I liked the company of the stage-driver much better, for he was like an old acquaintance. It was the same one that drove us past all those old farm-houses, when I first went over this road, and whom I had seen, almost daily, at C——, for two years. He was glad to see me again, and was glad that I was going back to C—— once more.

“ ‘ Do you intend to remain there ?’

“ ‘ Yes, for ever.’

“About a mile after we leave N——, the road winds

along down a steep hill, with a high, rocky precipice on the right, near the bottom, directly in front of an abrupt turn, with nothing but a single pole to prevent any one from going headlong over among the jagged rocks below.

“Our horses were restive, as they approached the spot—they saw something alarming.

“‘Some accident has happened,’ said the driver, looking back, as we were going rapidly down the steep road; ‘but don’t be alarmed, I shall go safe.’

“He reined up at the bottom of the hill, and we all got out, and went a little way back; and there hung a part of a buggy, by the pole, on the edge of the precipice.

“‘The horse, and the gentleman that was so anxious for you to ride with him,’ said the driver, looking over, ‘are both dead, at the bottom.’

“‘Don’t go with him,’ rang in my ears. I trembled to think of my narrow escape, and of the strange warning that I had received, which had, perhaps, saved me from being at that moment a mangled corpse, with the horse and his driver, mixed up with the wreck of the carriage, and covered with dirt and stones, that had gone down from the falling wall, in a mass together.

“‘It is a horrid sight—terrible, sickening,’ said the gentlemen passengers, as they looked over the parapet. ‘Pray, do not look at it,’ they said, as I came forward, with that object. But I felt an irresistible desire to get one glimpse, if possible, of the face of the unknown man, of whom I had been so strangely warned.

“As I was feeble, and probably looked pale, as though I

might faint and fall, at such a sight, one of the gentlemen took my arm, and supported me, as I looked down upon the wreck.

“The man lay upon his back, with face upturned and uninjured. My brain reeled at what I saw. It was not the sight of blood—I had had a sight of blood before, and did not faint. It was at the sight of that well-known face. Heaven had, at last, brought me to witness how my own and Celestine’s wrongs were avenged.

“That mangled corpse was all that I should ever see of George Lafale.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FINALE.

Arrival at C———Signs of a storm—Mistaken in who had enquired for her—Luthella goes at night to visit Celestine's grave—The Storm Fiend's serenade while she kneels there—Her heart yearns for something to love—Another vision or dream—Determines to go and meet her sister—The plunge—Drowning—Rescue—A declaration—A wedding and the end almost.

How we disregard all through life the sure prognostications of storms, and other hindrances of life's journey. Homely as that "sign of rain" is, which is indicated by the swine gathering straws for a bed, it is considered by many observing old farmers as one worthy of consideration.

Then all along the road, as the stage went on its way that afternoon, it was every now and then enveloped in little whirlwinds that gathered up the dust and leaves, and whirled them round and round, and up, up, and away down the mountain side, where the wind moaned out such hollow, yet human sounds, that an imaginative mind could easily fancy that the moans came from some dying genii of the mountain caves.

Then again, the wind soughed through the hemlock boughs, as it came over the ridge, and went on down into

the deep, dark ravines, furrowed out, by Time's plow, into awful chasms along the hill-sides.

There was another "sign of rain." The sky, that had been all day without a cloud, now grew overcast, and assumed that peculiar appearance that is indicated by the old proverb, which says :

"A curdly sky never leaves the ground dry."

Then the leaves upon the trees, without any wind to move them, or any visible cause, began to turn their white sides upward, which, in all rural districts, is one of the "sure signs" that a storm is near.

Again, as daylight faded, the moon showed herself as though struggling to push through a dense fog or haze.

"It will rain to-morrow."

"It will be a terrific storm."

"There will be no going out for a week."

These were the expressions that fell heavy as lead upon Luthella's ear. She was on a pilgrimage to her sister's grave and something impelled her forward beyond her control. To wait a week or day would be to her an almost unendurable punishment.

This day had been a lovely one, but such days are often followed by one of beating rain and howling wind, or drifting snow, or the damp chills of our early winter, or fog or mist ; or such uncomfortable days, perhaps weeks, that the invalid is shut up within doors till nature smiles again.

Our variable climate is one of the greatest faults that Europeans find with our country as compared with theirs.

Even the Esquimaux can stand his frozen region, because it is one regular freezing temperature.

These sure indications of a storm had made the time drag wearily to Luthella during the last few miles of her journey. She began to feel the effect of the exciting scenes of the day upon her feeble strength. She was excited, too, with such a strong desire to visit Celestine's grave, and unless she did it that night she might not be able to do it for some days. The more she thought of it, the stronger was the impression upon her mind, that her future destiny depended upon her going there without a moment's delay. They had been detained by that sad catastrophe that had sent a wicked man into eternity, almost as suddenly as though hurled by a thunderbolt, down that terrific precipice. He had died, too, with a bitter oath on his lips, and revenge in his heart.

He had died as the fool dies ; at enmity with God and man.

The fearful plunge down that mountain side was not the most fearful ; it was the sudden plunge into eternity. It is a scene, either peaceful or terrible, that we must all meet. Let us all have a care that we do not plunge down a more fearful height, into a deeper abyss.

Although it was a relief to Luthella to be freed from such a bitter enemy, she could not think of his death without a shudder, and she could not shake off the sad thought, or arouse herself to think or speak of any other subject. It was not his death, but the manner of it, and that he should have died without repentance, that made her sick at

heart. She grew more and more anxious to reach her journey's end, where she was sure to meet friends. She tried often to arouse herself, but found it a vain effort.

How she comforted herself with the thought of the pleasant meeting she would have with Mrs. Smiley, and how ardently she longed for the kind sympathy which she would have met with from her, as well as from all who knew her, but unfortunately, when the stage arrived, both Mr. and Mrs. Smiley, and the girls, were away from home, and there was not a soul except John, the hostler, who knew her. He expressed his pleasure, in a rude way, at her return, but it was sincere and honest, and such greeting goes home to the heart, when that which comes only from the lips, goes not beyond the ear.

John was really glad to see her, and hastened to tell her, though not in a very lucid manner, that :

"A gentleman came here to-day inquiring for you. He said he expected to find you here, and he was dreadful sorry you hadn't come ; and when I told him I didn't know as you were going to come, he went away in a heap of trouble."

Lafale was the only gentleman in Luthella's mind, who she thought could have inquired for her, and she replied :

"Well, John, he never will be in any more trouble in this world."

"Won't he, though ? Then you have seen him ?"

"Yes, for the last time."

"Have you though, for the last time ? That must have been a sad parting ; worse than the other last time. What did he say ?"

‘Not a word—it was very sudden.’

“Why, it must have been. I thought he liked you mighty well. But you didn’t like him—was that it?”

“Yes, that was it, John.”

“And so, you never expect to see him again?”

“Never.”

“Well, that is a long time. Where did you meet him?”

“On the mountain road, by the steep hill.”

“Impossible, unless he has a horse that goes like one of them—what-d’ye-call-it—on the rail-road. He said he was only going to ride out a little ways, and should be back to-night.”

“He never will come back.”

“Won’t he, though? Well, I declare, he must have been terribly cut up, wa’n’t he, when you left him?”

“Yes, terribly—and his horse too.”

“His horse too—why, goodness gracious, what did you say?”

“Indeed, I don’t know; but don’t let us talk about it any more.”

“Oh, very well—just as you like; but I don’t understand it, particularly about the horse.”

No wonder; John was talking about one party, and Luthella another. She only thought of Lafale and his terrible death; and with that upon her mind, and not finding the sympathizing friends that she expected, she felt melancholy indeed. As soon as John told her that all the family were away, her spirits sunk down to gloom. Not one of her female friends were there to welcome her, and although

she sat down to supper and tried to eat, the food stuck in her throat. She had hoped to get Lenfolia, Mrs. Smiley's niece, to go with her that night to the grave-yard ; but when she inquired after her, she found that it was upon her wedding party that all were absent. The wind whistled louder and louder ; the window-shutters banged ; the sash rattled ; the limbs of the old buttonwood thrashed the roof ; and all the signs of the weather portended that the storm was rapidly coming to a head.

" I *must* go to-night," said she, putting on her bonnet.

" Go, miss ! why, you ain't going away, are you ?" said the girl.

" Only out a little way, to meet a friend. I shall be back soon. Don't tell Mrs. Smiley that I have been here, if she comes back before I do."

" I wonder," said the girl, after she had gone, " how I should tell her that you had been here, since you had not manners enough to tell me your name. Why, as I live, if she isn't going right down towards the grave-yard. I do believe she is crazy. I guess she would be frightened, if she should meet that young minister ; and I shouldn't wonder if she did, for he went off that way, after tea, and I haven't seen him since."

Luthella had been gone nearly an hour, when the wedding party returned—so full of glee, one would have thought they could think of nothing else ; but as soon as Mrs. Smiley caught sight of the trunks standing in the hall, she cried out :

" Luthella Brandon, as I live. Where is she ? Sally,

where is she? Has she gone to bed? If she has, I must see her before I sleep."

"And I." "And I." "And I," cried each, in turn, as earnestly as though she had been a dear-loved sister, just returned to her own home.

"Where is she? Where is she?" was upon every tongue, as the girls ran about the house, to hunt her.

If any of the scandal-lovers of M—— had been there, they would have had better evidence than anonymous letters, of the estimation in which she was held in "the hotel she left without paying her board."

Sally, in answer to the inquiry, Where is she? said: "If they meant that gal that come in the stage—the one that owned that trunk, and looked so pale and sickly, and could not eat her supper—I do believe she must be crazy; at least, I thought she must be crazy, to go off to the burying-ground, alone, at this time of night."

"You would not think so, if you knew her," said Mrs. Smiley; "or wonder at her anxiety to visit her sister's grave; especially, if you knew what an angel of a sister she was, when living; and that she is now among the throng of good spirits that watch over the good of earth, and make heaven more full of happiness; and then to think of her wrongs and sufferings here—deserted by her father, mourned as dead, for years, by her relatives, deceived and ruined by a villain. Well, well—I believe in the justice as well as mercy of heaven, and that George Lafale will meet with his deserts yet, some day. Well, Fred, what is it, with your 'Mother, mother!'"

"Oh, mother, mother, do listen—George Lafale!"——

"I won't listen. I won't hear a word of the scamp. If he is here, I will turn him out of the house. He is not going to dog that poor girl to death, while she is under my roof, I can tell him that."

"Why, mother, you won't let me tell you."

"Yes I will, my son—what is it?"

"Why, mother, he is killed—drove off of Crooked Creek Hill ledge, and all smashed to jelly; and he has killed that pretty horse, too, don't you think, mother."

"Has he? Well, I am sorry—for the horse."

She was not for its owner, and would not say so.

She did not rejoice in the death of a fellow-creature, but still she could not mourn, because she looked upon his death as a retribution of heaven, and as a warning to others to pursue a different course of life. His acts of wickedness had hastened the death of Celestine, and he was almost the direct cause of the death of her mother, and if he could have persuaded Luthella to accompany him, perhaps she, too, would have been with Celestine. And if not dashed upon the rocks, who can tell that her fate would not have been more terrible, once in the power of such an unprincipled villain?

How could Mrs. Smiley mourn the death of such a man? She even felt an anxiety to convey the intelligence to Luthella, as something pleasing. She did not know how deeply, how terribly that death had already been graven upon the poor girl's mind; and that the effect of the scene upon her feeble health had almost unseated her reason.

Mrs. Smiley also felt anxious at Luthella's absence, and said to Lenfolia,

"Let us start down the road to meet her ; and even if we go quite there, it is not over half a mile by the path across the hill. I long to see her and tell her the news."

She did not think that they had more news to learn than they had to give.

They each wrapped a large shawl about their shoulders, and put on their "sun-bonnets," and hurried away across the hill, by the path that Luthella had gone.

It was so dark when Luthella reached Celestine's grave, and she was so intently absorbed in thought, while her eyes were fixed upon the neat white paling and shrubbery that some one had planted around it, that she did not notice a dark object moving away from the other side while she knelt on this. It is almost impossible to imagine a more lonely spot for the living to commune with the dead, than the cemetery of C——, at midnight, and such a night as this. The moon was only at half full, and shrouded all the time with a hazy veil, while clouds were flitting every now and then across her face, and only here and there a star, peeping down for a moment upon that grassy green grave and its neat enclosure, holding a faded rose-bush at one end, and a bunch of rich chrysanthemums, in full bloom, at the other ; while the wind came with a sigh into the old maple tops over head, or went hurtling down the valley, over the pond, and the little cascade at the dam, a few rods below.

The stream, in places, was bordered with small evergreen bushes, growing down to the water's edge ; and a little fur-

ther on, a perpendicular rock stood like a wall between the water and land.

The dam had been built to form a pretty lakelet as an addition to the scenery, and by its twenty feet fall, the water kept up one eternal strain of music of a tone suited to the solemnity of the place.

On the other side of the pond, there was a high, ragged hill, covered with fragments of broken rocks, that had, during time's ages, tumbled down from the jagged precipices, along which there was a growth of dark evergreens, with here and there a scathed oak, stretching its giant arms abroad, standing sentry for ages over those that were sleeping below.

Through these trees, and over these rocks, the wind now swept, tearing and crashing along with a sound like the rushing of a herd of mastodons, charging to battle, crushing rocks and trees beneath their tread, and splashing through the water, in a march of solemn grandeur, and with music art can never imitate.

It is not in the concert hall, or in the march of armies, in peace or war, with their grand array of instruments, that nature's music is to be heard or imitated. If you would have it in perfection, go out upon such an autumn night as this, when the storm-fiend is marshaling his bands, and listen to the serenade of the dead in such a solemn place as this.

And in such a place too, it is good for us all at proper times to go and hold communion—not with the dead, but with our own hearts. We need not choose the hour of

midnight, when the wind that precedes a storm howls through the tree-tops, like some wild beast intent upon prey ; but we may go out upon a still, calm evening, or a Sabbath afternoon, and sit down by the side of a sister's grave, or the grave of some departed friend, and then look into our own hearts, and make inquiry : " Am I prepared to come here for the last time ?"

A cemetery is, by the very nature of its use, a place of solemnity. It was unusually so this particular evening.

It is no wonder that Luthella was entranced—that she lost all consciousness of sublunary things, while her body was so near that of Celestine, and her mind with hers in the spirit-land of the blest. It is no wonder, when she reviewed her life, and felt all the miseries she had endured, and how little of pure friendship she had enjoyed on earth, and how utterly lonely she was in the world, that she should long to be with the only being she had ever found whose mind fully sympathized with hers, while their hearts beat in unison.

Never, in all her young years, had she felt that heavenly enjoyment that comes with pure love, whether to things earthly or heavenly.

She had longed, with an earnest longing, for something upon which to place her affections.

" I could," said she, " have loved a dog, if I knew the poor, speechless thing loved me. I fairly yearned after some object that I could press to my heart, while I felt that that object reciprocated my earnest affection. I thought, when I first came among the girls at the cotton factory—for the

great mass of them were good, honest, virtuous girls—that I surely should find one among them all that I could love, who would love me. Perhaps I should, but my affections were drawn away from them by that wretch upon whom heaven took vengeance at last in an awful, bloody death.

“But I found at last what I had long sought, that happy, holy love, in my sister Celestine ; who, like me, had been, ever since she lost her mother, pining after something to fill that aching void in the human heart. Then, after enjoying, as I did, her love for two years ; and after all the rebuffs and sickness of the next year ; and after witnessing the horrible scene that I did that day ; and then when I expected to meet sympathizing friends, to find myself among strangers ; and afterwards alone upon such a night by the side of Celestine’s grave ; is it any wonder that for a moment I should have lost my reason ?”

It would have been wonderful if she had not.

“I was unconscious,” said Luthella, “of the passing time, for an hour, while these thoughts were rushing like that race-horse, with broken bit, down that fearful hill and death-dealing precipice at the bottom, and well-nigh I came to making a still more fearful leap.

“I thought, and I never could divest my mind of the reality, that Celestine got up from her earthy bed and walked slowly out of the little enclosure toward the pond, beckoning me all the time with her hand, and such a sweet smile, to follow her, that I could not resist, any more than the needle can resist magnetic attraction, or the fluid stop midway upon its journey along the telegraph wires.

“At that very moment, an owl, I suppose it must have been, in the top of a wild-looking dead tree, on the opposite bank, fluttered his broad wings in the pale moonlight—for the clouds at that moment had blown away, and the wind lulled to an awful calm. While I was watching the spectre, as it moved away, the town-clock commenced striking twelve; reviving all the tales I had heard of ghosts that walked about at that hour. Mingled with the slow, solemn peals of the bell, as I made my measured step along the way my guide led me, came the owl’s voice, pealing upon the midnight air, sounding to my ear as though the spectre had said: ‘Follow, follow, follow;’ and, at the same moment, it disappeared over the precipice, as though it had gone down into the deep pool below.

“I had not spoken a word since I reached the spot, for my prayers had been mental instead of wordy expressions, but now I cried out, ‘I will, I will, I will!’

“It was thus I answered, as I sprang toward the edge of the bank where Celestine had disappeared. In a moment more and I should have been beyond the reach of earthly aid, if I had been alone. I was not.

Mrs. Smiley and Lenfolia, had been standing almost within reach of me for some minutes. Thinking I was engaged in prayer, they were unwilling to disturb my devotions. But when I started up so wildly, and uttered these words, they felt that what Sally had said: ‘I believe she is crazy;’ was literally true, and that I was going to drown myself.

“They screamed, as only a woman at such a time, at such a sight, of a fellow-creature about to plunge down a steep

bank to certain death, can scream ; outscreeaming the wild owl upon the old tree, and out-sounding the old church bell's midnight tones."

Both sprang forward to save the poor maniac, but they were all too slow. No deer ever made a more sudden or rapid bound. Her white dress gleamed a moment like a flash in the pale light, and then there was a splash in the water, twenty feet below, and ere they could reach the edge of the bank, a dark object passed between them and the moon, and then they heard a second plunge, and all was still but the ripples of the disturbed pool, breaking against the rocky bank. Directly, the dark object emerged from below the surface, bringing with him the inanimate form of the drowning girl. Desperately he strived to get foot or hand-hold of the slippery rocks, or some bushes that grew only a few inches beyond his reach. But he could not, and evidently would be able to sustain his burden but a moment longer. Quick as thought, Mrs. Smiley said :

" Your shawl, Lenfolia, your shawl ! "

She knotted the corners of that and her own together, and leaped down upon the narrow ledge where the bushes grew, and swung one end to the man in the water ; he fastened it around the girl's body, while Mrs. Smiley secured the other to a bush.

" Now, your hand."

And now he stood by her side. In a second more, and Luthella was drawn up and laid upon the grass. But where was Lenfolia ? Thoughtful girl ! She had sped like an arrow to her home, and before Luthella had aroused to

consciousness, assistance was there to carry her to the house.

When she came to herself, next morning, she was in bed in the same room she used to occupy, stripped of her wet garments, and dressed in a suit of Lenfolia's night-clothes, looking all the sweeter for her cold bath the night before.

The storm was howling with terrific fury on the outside, but all was calm as peace and love within ; for there sat the man who had saved her, with her hand pressed in his, and he had just whispered to her :

" I have loved you since the time we first met over your dying sister, my poor cousin, and now I have been sent by Providence to save you from death—be mine—be happy."

" Yes," said Mrs. Smiley and Lenfolia, while both their husbands nodded approval, " and next week we will have another wedding, and you shall be Mrs. Blythe White."

THE STORY FINISHED.

READER : The preceding page closed my tale of the GREEN MOUNTAIN GIRLS, but I have a word more to say. Perhaps you would like to hear a little more of some of the characters with whom you have become acquainted in the progress of the story.

Perhaps you would like to glance at some of the scenes where the actors once lived—still live, some of them.

Suppose we go up the railroad to Brandon Valley. The bridge you cross, just before you stop, occupies the site of that once known as "Smugglers' Bridge," and the railway station-house stands over the ashes of Deacon Brandon's Distillery. The smugglers' trade has been killed by common sense. Cars traverse iron rails from Montreal to Boston, along some of the smugglers' dark paths, through the valleys.

Look up eastward from the station-house. Do you see that lone rock on the side hill, and that vine-clad tree, spreading its cool shade over that rural seat? That is Alida's Rock. I penned a part of this story under that shade, by the side of that rock, with the scene of things I have told spread out before me.

Cars run from Boston to Montreal, did I say? That

does not express a tittle of the changes that have taken place, within forty years, in the region over which the characters spoken of in this volume traversed. Yes, and that is not all that may be said of these characters. More than half of those who are introduced in the early stages of the story have taken passage in the car of fate, and travelled by the express train that carries us all rapidly to our journey's end.

And the express trains upon the iron rails that, in spite of hills, rocks, rivers, mountains, have been stretched out over the land, are carrying passengers and freight to a thousand villages that were hidden so deep among the mountains that the most sanguine dreamer, forty years ago, would not have ventured a prophesy that they would ever be dug out by the persevering industry of railway-builders, till the north part of Vermont and Boston could shake hands, morning and evening.

Ah, here is one of the old settlers, by his dress, come to look at the cars, just as though he had not seen them arrive every day, for the last year. Let us hear what it is that he is saying about railroads.

"Folks don't travel as they used to when I was a boy. Then we never used to think of going to Boston but once a year, when it was good sledding, to carry down the butter and cheese, and turkeys, for Christmas, and bring home some salt. And I have carried many a bag of that a hundred miles on horseback. Now, look here, dang my buttons, if here ain't fresh fish that left Boston this morning. I wonder what next?"

So did I, as I looked at this antediluvian, and in vain for the buttons that he swore by, upon a buttonless coat: I wondered what next, in this onward march of the national giant—industry, which has so changed things that “folks don’t travel as they used to.” I did not doubt the assertion of the odd specimen of humanity, or that in his day he used to pack salt on horseback, for this was Jason Inwright, the man that created no surprise, when he proposed to carry the grindstone in the same way.

It could not be said of Jason, that he does not travel in the same way he did then, for I noticed, as he rode off on a specimen of the “woolly horse,” that, for aught that appearances indicated, it was the same “Old Brandy,” and the same old saddle, supported with its bags of straw, and the same bridle, made of moosewood bark.

Jason is one of the unchangeables, as well as unaccountables. He is one of the few living characters of my story, though not a very prominent one. That cannot be said of him, where he is known. He always has been a marked character; and “odd as Jason” is one of the marked sayings of that region.

The parsonage and its inmates have been as accurately described in Luthella’s dream, as though it had been a reality.

The new owner of the old distillery did not long survive a loss that rendered him unable to enjoy the home that he had obtained by a wicked wrong to the widow and orphans.

God is just.

The cunning of “old Fox” could not save him from

coming to sleep in the same yard with Deacon Brandon, and a very large portion of those that were skilled in cunning, forty years ago : but what avails cunning, when Death calls ? Death is God's messenger !

Jim Arnold, the "stupid Yankee," that outwitted old Fox with his "hardware," lives in yonder beautiful house, upon the farm that you admired so much, which he bought with the profits of a contract on the railroad.

You recollect the pleasant party and trip we made last summer, on that pretty little steamboat, when we stopped at Howel's, on the shore of Lake Memphremagog. That is the same Howel that kept the house where Alida was married. He is a gray-haired old grandfather of—I don't know how many grandchildren. His girls all married well, and did a good part towards multiplying and replenishing the earth.

It is a great treat to hear my grandfather tell of things that transpired around that lake, in early times, when Stephen Burroughs was supposed to have his manufactory of counterfeit money somewhere in the recesses of those mountains.

The north part of Vermont was a wilderness then—it is now a land of flocks and herds, and industrious farmers and happy homes. It heard then the nightly scream of the panther ; the growl of the bear ; the bark of the wolf ; the tread of the moose. It hears now the scream of the locomotive ; the bell of the steamboat ; the hymn of praise ; the tread of onward-marching civilization ; and the people see the horn of plenty full, and sing songs of joy.

God is just!

The waters of Lake Champlain, where Michael drove that exciting night-race, still freeze in winter, for nature is still the same : it is only ourselves that change ; but in summer what a change from the time when hostile fleets rained death's missiles into each other. I sailed over its placid waters a few weeks since, in company with five hundred others, upon a gorgeous hotel, floating between Rouse's Point and Whitehall. I looked for the spot where the two desperate smugglers went down ; but, though I saw the hill, up which Michael carried the perishing woman and child and their unconscious husband and father ; and though I saw the sweet village at its foot, and read the names of "Yorkbridge, Field and Granly," upon one of the gilded signs, and knew that they were rich merchants, who would endorse my notes, which I have here put afloat, if requisite to give them currency, I saw nothing to mark their graves.

I looked in vain for any sign to show that two such men as Scale Williams and John Longwood, had lived or died near the spot where I was then meditating upon the men, and things of life that filled this scene, fifty years ago.

At "Field's Wharf," a bridal party came on board, some of whom I knew, and all of whom I was certainly glad to see. I was introduced by Judge Franklin May, to his daughter, Mary Tharp May, just married to Col. Yorkbridge's oldest son. There was a noble, fine-looking old gentleman, his head covered with flowing gray locks, in the company, who the reader will recognize as one of the good fruits of a good daughter's earnest prayers, when I tell them that this was

Mary Tharp's father. While he is living to a good old age, an honored and respected Deacon, every one of that bar-room company have gone——where——echo answers.

In this company there was a most lovely woman of something less than fifty years, around whom clustered a large family of children and grandchildren, all of whom bore the marks of a respectable rank in society. She was a woman of marked good sense, and a flow of cheerful conversation. She was a widow ; and as such will end her days in happy remembrance of her excellent husband, who died as he lived, respected by a very large circle of acquaintances.

"Who is she," I whispered in Dr. Field's ear.

"Why my dear boy, don't you know? —— Here, Granly, pray tell Blythe who this lady is that attracts so much attention. She attracted your attention once not many miles from this spot. I think Blythe has heard the story. Well, then, I will tell it myself. That, that is my little patient of Stanstead barracks—the same one that Michael saved from death upon the ice of Lake Champlain, within sight of yonder village. There was no village then.

"It is a story that would read well in a collection of tales, such as I can give you the incidents of, if you will embody them in a volume. There is the story of Alida and Celestine ; of your wife and her mother : of Mary Tharp, and what she has done for that fine old man, her father ; and then I will tell you some funny anecdotes of Decker's wife ; and" ——

"Will you put in the smugglers, Doctor?"

"Yes, yes. I will tell you a string of stories to fill up.

Depend upon it, you could make a very readable book. Will you do it?"

"I will try. But what shall I call it?"

"Call it! Why I don't know. No matter what you call it. What's in a name?"

"A good deal—everything in a book—it must have a good name and an appropriate one."

"I have it, then—capital—call it, 'The Green Mountain Girls!' a story of Vermont, forty years ago."

"That is very good—it is very expressive too, since some of the principal personages illustrate the character of the early settlers of these mountains. I will try what I can do."

"That is right. But recollect one thing, though, you must not use anybody's real name. Give them something as *noms de guerre*, that nobody can guess at."

"What shall I call you, Doctor?"

"Let me see; I think I will figure as Doctor Field. That is short—always pick for short names—it saves a deal of writing. And so we will call you White. Now don't forget your own name."

I did not, nor what I had promised, and that very night, in my chamber at Saratoga, I sketched the plan of the volume, and wrote one chapter; and the next morning I submitted the whole to Doctor Field, and he said, "Capital," which is a great word with him, and may lead to his identity, among his intimate acquaintances.

Seeing that I was in earnest, he sat down all that day and told me anecdotes and incidents, that I have embodied

in my tale of the Green Mountain Girls. How well I have told my story, I leave it to you to say. Doctor Field says it is not a tale—a romance—it is a history of life among the early settlers of Vermont. He says, the book will be read with pleasure and profit, long after we are gathered to our fathers.

There was another character among the party that came on board at Yorkbridge Landing, who seemed to attract one's attention, both from the benevolence of their countenances, and pleasant conversation, and because the old gentleman seemed to be known to so many, both on the boat, and at that delightful home of travellers, at Saratoga, known as Congress Hall.

“Who is he?” was the anxious inquiry of many a stranger.

That was Squire Granly—not Mike Granly, the poor fatherless, motherless, homeless, outcast boy—no, but it is the man that has grown out of that very boy.

“And who is that pale, but intelligent-looking young man, in company with him, that looks as though he might be a young minister?”

He is, a minister to the poor—to just such boys as his father was, in all his young days.

He is one of the missionaries to the abodes of poverty, want, wretchedness, crime, and woe, in the great emporium of America. You may sometimes find him in the chapels of the mission-houses of the notorious Five Points of New York ; and sometimes in the ragged schools of the outcast children ; and sometimes in dens of crime, among the fallen of both sexes, wherever he imagines that duty calls, or

where he can do good ; and sometimes in the abode of some poor widow, who has struggled hard to keep herself and children from beggary, where he has gone to carry joy to her heart, while acting as the almoner of some benevolent soul, who had rather intrust his or her alms to him than climb themselves into garrets of tenant houses, or down into damp basements where the poor live.

If you would know anything of Mrs. Blythe White, go with that young missionary—you can find her too among the “missions ;” and you will find her like gold tried by fire. It is to her, more than her husband, that you are indebted for this story—may it be to all who read it like gold that enricheth—like music that charmeth—like trials that chasteneth—like fire that purifieth.

If you would like to visit her native place, to inquire about this story, you can find the town of M——, and Mrs. Brandon living upon the same farm where Alida was carried fainting from the stage. You will find her a wiser, better, happier woman. You will not find Risley. He has paid the great debt, and left Mrs. Brandon in the use of the property wrongfully obtained from her husband. It was a simple act of justice ; but therewith, his children are not content. They say they are the “legitimate heirs ;” and if the law would aid them, they would send the widow once more to the poor-house. Such is man’s justice to his fellow man. God is just !

If you find in this book good characters—emulate them. If bad—be warned and avoid them. Still more would you learn of these living or dead prototypes of my characters ?

go among the originals, and study life as it is among the *Green Mountains* of Vermont, or among the offshoots of the Green Mountain stock, not only among their native hills, but upon the fertile plains of the West ; or among the gold mines of California ; or peering into the crater of Vesuvius ; or climbing Mont Blanc ; or here, there, and everywhere, where you may find the sons and daughters of Vermont, there you may find an original for some one of the hundred characters whose portraits are drawn in this volume.

If you love the character of Alida Blythe—if you honor and respect, as do all who know him, Squire Granly, think what he was, and what he would have been, but for the good influence upon his youth of that good girl.

Remembering, as he ever has, what he was when a poor, unprotected boy, is it any wonder that he gave the answer that he did to his son, when he asked him, “What pursuit shall I follow, now I have completed my education ? I seek your advice, father.”

“Go to yonder great city—it is full of just such boys as I was, when God sent a missionary to instil principles of truth, love, charity, honor—all the Christian virtues into my heart—go as a missionary to just such boys ; be to them an aid—a guide—a helping hand in time of need—give them instruction, counsel, and such assistance as God and those who love good works may put into your hands to give. Go visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and you shall have my blessing.”

“Father, I will go ; and so far as the devotion of my

life to such a cause can pay the debt you owe, I will pay it. I only wish to live to do good."

Reader, that has been the object of the author of this book. We have had a long, and, to me (and so I hope to you), a pleasant journey together ; and now we have arrived at the last station, where we must say farewell, and part for ever.

God is just !

To us all, at the last station of life, may He be merciful !

Farewell !

THE END.









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